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The treatment of the body in the fiction of JM Coetzee

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Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis aims to demonstrate how the representation of the body in the fiction of JM Coetzee[1] has an incisive effect on atmosphere, characterisation, plot and themes. The incisive effect the treatment of the body has on the writing manifests itself in a number of devices that are both original and powerful. What it is that characterises the body through all of these devices of representation is its strangeness.

Harold Bloom uses the term "strangeness" as an important literary device in his search for "The Western Canon":

> I have tried to confront greatness directly: to ask what makes the author and the works canonical. The answer, more often than not, has turned out to be strangeness, a mode of originality that either cannot be assimilated, or that so assimilates us that we cease to see it as strange. (Bloom 2-3)

The idea of an originality that cannot be assimilated is an interesting one in the context of a writer like Coetzee since one of the recurrent themes that this study of the body will investigate is the sense of enmity, conflict and otherness that it creates in the fiction. The strangeness of Coetzee's bodies resides in their power to stand out, and from one perspective, refuse assimilation with the text.

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[1] Please note that by fiction I include the semi-autobiographical texts Boyhood (1997) and Youth (2002)).

However, not to fall back on Bloom's definition of the word too comfortably, this thesis is not arguing that Coetzee's innovative treatment of the body is recognised as "canonical" in any way (and the term "canonical" is a problematic one) or that this theme has been assimilated as a sign of greatness. It is precisely the "mode of originality" of the representation of the body that makes it worthy of thorough investigation.

Furthermore, "strangeness" itself as a term is too nebulous to describe the specific treatment of the body in JM Coetzee's novels. Whichever single term I use for the sake of cogency, clarity and taxonomy, the full gamut of effects created by devices such as endoscope, zero degree physiognomy, bodily plot structure and inverted fable could never be encapsulated in one term without that term being either too restrictive or too broad. I nonetheless use "strangeness" frequently in my discussion of the body for at its primary level the word conveys much of the atmosphere and effect created in the fiction.

Another term can be used, coined by the Russian Formalist Victor Shklovsky, associated with strangeness and yet more precise, one that is closer to the manner in which Coetzee subtly distorts the perception of the body: "defamiliarisation".

Shklovsky's term "defamiliarisation" needs to be understood in the context of early twentieth century Russian Formalism. Roman Jakobson and Jurii Tynianov, along with Shklovsky, were seeking to examine literature by "laying bare the device" (obnazhenie priema). This means approaching the text in terms of its structures by exposing the devices that are used. In the specific case of defamiliarisation, the devices that create a

dissonant, strange and fresh effect in the reader are what I will be "laying bare" when looking to the body.

"Defamiliarisation" is not a term I choose lightly to describe the effect of JM Coetzee's treatment of the body. Shklovsky, in his essay, "Art as Technique" (1917) states that "the purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived, and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects "unfamiliar", to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception" (12). The term comes from the Russian ostranenie which means "making strange".

Shklovsky's work may be dated, but I will argue that the term – relating to this artistic "strangeness" - encapsulates JM Coetzee's endeavour when it comes to the body very accurately. It also points towards a poetic reading since the strictly knowledge-based approach to art criticism does not do enough justice to the peculiar (if I could coin a word, it would be "unanalyseable") factor to be found in JM Coetzee's writings, the passages that speak to parts of the mind that "prefer sensations to ideas" (Elizabeth Costello 24)).

My argument, therefore, is that the body is used as a defamiliarising agent in the prose. Through this defamiliarisation, the body becomes a crucial source of agency and meaning. [2]

[2] I am not suggesting that the term defamiliarisation should be understood in its largest formalist definition (as a laying bare of the device, but often in a technical, narratological way), but more at the simplest level of artistic strangeness. My use of the word is closer to Shklovsky's reading of the battle scenes in War and

The thesis will show in each chapter how different themes are approached through the author's treatment of the body and how this heightened perception uses the body to make innovative statements about the human condition. The thesis will follow a thematic structure and not a chronological one.

JM Coetzee is, of course, a contemporary author, still living and writing as these words are written. Conducting research on a living, writing figure is a particular situation, as it brings into question the effectiveness of synthetic hindsight, given the time between the production and the study of the literature. If I may offer a metaphor: it is a little like prospecting or exploring a living body: the organs cannot be excised and decorticated as they could be in a post mortem (for in that case, like the end of an author's production, the body has stopped evolving and the pressures of context can be discussed with hindsight). In our case these organs can only be viewed as they interact with each other and with the living public that reads and responds. It is, in part, because of the unusual character of this living tissue of literature that I offer, as well as analysis, a poetics as critical response. If poetics involves the poetic, being derived from the Greek *poetes*: the maker or creator; then this study's primary objective is in itself an innovative and creative response to the literature.

Coetzee's work, from the publication of his first novel, Dusklands (1974) to Slow Man (2005), has evolved in an extraordinarily eclectic manner that challenges the reader in his

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Peace (these described in his article "Art as Device"), where he argues that Tolstoy uses defamiliarisation through the strange and heightened perception he creates.

or her response.[3] The range of themes covered in the corpus of the thirteen novels and semi-autobiographical works is considerable: indeed this exceptional versatility is one of the distinctions recognised in his writing by the Nobel Committee upon his winning of the Nobel Prize for Literature.[4] This diversity in itself invites investigation, as does the comparative paucity of critical works which deal with the body, the central focus of this thesis.

This study looks to the body for meaning quite simply because its presence in the writings is continuous and heavily significant; in the cases of Waiting for the Barbarians (1980), Life & Times of Michael K (1983) and Slow Man, it is overwhelmingly so, but in all of the novels it plays a determining role. In his poetics, Coetzee declares in Doubling the Point (1992): "the body with its pain becomes a counter to the endless trials of doubt" (248) and goes on to say that the "standard" of his work is "the body" and that this body is more than a gap in meaning, but indeed a unifying essence. The idea of a "unifying essence" is an important one, for it suggests that rather than being at the periphery of some extrapolated portrayal, the organism is the central focus through which experience is concentrated.

[3] My reading of JM Coetzeee concurs with Derek Attridge's observations from pages 4 -10, and in the whole of chapter 1 of J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading (2005) in so far as J.M. Coetzee's writings necessitate "an engagement with the text, that recognizes, and capitalizes on, its potential for reinterpretation" (10) rather than looking at the opus as "the product of historical processes".
[4] "There is a great wealth of variety in Coetzee's works. No two books ever follow the same recipe" (Swedish Academy 2003).

This study aims to chart the Coetzeean body through a poetical analysis that will be used to support the argument that the body in Coetzee's work establishes its own laws (it is "defamiliarised"), elucidating the human condition in a powerful, original manner.[5]

Which Body?

Over the span of the last thirty three years, critical response has been as varied as the writings themselves. To synthesise these different approaches now and give a detailed overview of the way Coetzee's bodies have been dealt with by means of an introduction would require an incommensurately large digression from my own argument. Because of this, pertinent links with critics will be established piecemeal in the various chapters as we voyage through the body, to advance my own reading. Nonetheless, not to start in the dark completely, a few basic points will be made as concerns the reading of the body by Coetzee's critics, with some emphasis on the very few papers that concentrate solely on the body. The reader needs to wait until chapter 2 to commence with my own response to the subject.

The fact that Coetzee has been received so thoroughly is in itself an important argument for the power and validity of his prose as a subject of study. He has engendered a large mass of writings over the last thirty odd years that has responded to the texts with-changes in direction that mirror the publications' versatility. As is natural for a living writer, the criticism has been a response to apparent changes in theme and form in

[5] In writing a poetics I hope to avoid, in David Attwell's words "a sterile series of assertions and counterassertions about the relative weight of the diagnoses being offered" (J.M. 23) and present a more lively approach– albeit perilous methodologically.

Coetzee's own unfolding writing. And yet none of the major studies has looked to the body as the central theme in his works.

After the publication of works such as Dusklands (1974), In the Heart of the Country (1977), and Waiting for the Barbarians (1980) and Life & Times of Michael K (1983), all of them centred on neurotic narrators,[6] Teresa Dovey applies post-Freudian psychoanalysis to the fiction in The Novels of J.M. Coetzee: Lacanian Allegories (1988). She writes along with Sue Kossew and Susan Gallagher, applying a psychoanalytical heuristic reading, locating his treatment of the body as primarily Lacanian, more specifically as part of the Lacanian "split subject".[7] Without going into too much detail here, for Dovey's insights will be discussed as the thesis unfolds, I would argue that this type of analysis tends to substrate the body too easily to the role of a meaningless apposition to language and does not do justice to the strong semiotics the body generates within the text. The way the body expresses itself in the prose, according to my reading, is far simpler than as part of a subject split between utterance and fullness: it is recreated in a vivid and strange manner with an affirmative language of pain and corporeality.

The middle section of the writings, witnessing the publication of novels such as Foe and Age of Iron, elicits questions on history as discourse. David Attwell's J.M Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing (1993) illustrates Coetzee's design to write

[6] Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee, the narrators of Dusklands, as well as Magda, the protagonist of In the Heart of the Country, all commit (and imagine committing) acts of terrible violence: Dawn tries to kill his son Martin, Magda kills her father (although from a phenomenological reading we could argue that it is part of her delusional psychosis and is not "real") while Jacobus is a serial killer who massacres Hottentots.

[7] The subject is split between utterance and fullness. Although a Lacanian analysis of the body substrates it to the mind, Lawlan, in locating the Coetzeean self, describes a "certain consciousness…which includes the body it finds itself in" (134).

South Africa into a broader context of post colonial literature and general historical theory, explaining how Coetzee writes against the grain of rationalist interpretation of history as he creates a "politics of agency" (Attwell J.M. 3) that counters the conventional ideological hold. The idea of agency is important because what it tells us about the Coetzeean subject is that (s)he is a dramatised site of conflict between the stance of "the implied narrator" (13) and the "narrative subject". This idea of the dramatisation of a conflict supports my reading of the body as a defamiliarising agent. The narrative subject corresponds to the body, the implied narrator to the mind. Through this dissonance the body becomes (a) strange(r).

Works like Disgrace (1999), Boyhood (1997) and Youth (2002) are clearly different in that their protagonists (interestingly though, none of them narrators) are far less deranged and come closer to an everyman figure. This "phase" of the writings has lead more to historicist and post modernist readings such as Derek Attridge's J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading (2005). Attridge's study draws on Jacques Derrida to a large extent and needs to be read with the Singularity of Literature (2006), which is informed by Emmanuel Levinas, crucially. Many of Attridge's ideas, particularly his adoption of Derrida's term "aporia", correspond with this thesis' study of the body as enigmatic and illusive. "Aporia", close to the word "meaninglessness", is what Attridge reads "when the body feels or acts in ways that exceed or escape any possible conceptualization – as, for instance, in the magistrate's obscure physical desires in *Waiting for the Barbarians* or K's body's refusal to eat the food of the camps in *Michael K* (Attridge J.M. 88).

However, an important difference between my reading and Attridge's is that I analyse the body in Coetzee as an expressive body that speaks with a powerful voice, an utterance that further defamiliarises the reader. Whilst I agree that the body is illusive and enigmatic, I argue that it is not meaningless (it is not, to quote Coetzee, "that which is not"), that on the contrary it holds a strong significance at many levels in the prose.

This thesis lies in the wake of Elizabeth Costello (2003) – dedicated largely to debate on animals - and Slow Man, a novel that commences with an accident and an amputation and dwells on the physical experience of amputation with tenacity. How should we respond to the Coetzeean opus now? All of these three major studies (Dovey, Attwell and Attridge) [8], as well as much supporting criticism (Jolly, Helgesson, Marais, Knox-Shaw, Heyns, Boehmer), recognises a conflict between the authority of the sign and the ongoing resistance to it as marking the fiction. This accounts for the sense of division that we can trace between the mind and the body. It should be pointed out that these directions are not necessarily exclusive or contradictory (this concept in itself is important to understand: Coetzee is not offering solutions but dramatising conflicts).

The critical studies undertaken have tended towards a clearer understanding of the elusive novelist. Ironically, though, this has lead the critic to less familiar ground rather than established references: abstract terms such as "agency"[9] and "event"[10] need to be used

[8] (Teresa Dovey's analysis is strongly psychoanalytical, David Attwell's historicist whereas Derek Attridge's recent study explores the event of reading with recurrent emphasis on Jacques Derrida and "literature in the event". All of these major studies are investigated and engaged to elucidate my position and posit my argument in the various chapters).
[9] J.M Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing (12)
[10] J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading (39-40, 60-62, 64, 200)

for the texts to be treated with the same complexity, innovation and originality that the novels themselves abound with.

Teresa Dovey's study, by describing the novels as "allegories", places Coetzee in a traditional style (the question of allegory is looked at in chapter 4 of this study). David Attwell's analysis suggests a political reading ("politics" being far broader a term than "allegory" and therefore suggesting a less restrictive analysis) whereby the power of interpretation is displaced (Attwell J.M. 99), while Derek Attridge's monograph, which is a synthesis of Dovey's insights on narrative instability and Attwell's understanding of politics and history, leads us to an investigation of reading and writing in a reader response vein that tends towards the difficulty of the text.[11] All of these writings, as does much, if not all, Coetzeean criticism, refer to key "postmodernist" thinkers such as Jacques Lacan, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Derrida in particular gains renewed significance in Attwell and Attridge.[12]

Stephan Helgesson's Writing in Crisis (2004), like Mike Marais' article "'Very morbid phenomena: "liberal funk", the "Lucy-syndrome"'(2001), makes the case for Levinas' thesis on alterity (Helgesson 188) as a potential interpretive grid for Coetzee, in this way integrating the important theme of a displaced imperialistic narrative, dramatised in Life

[11] Ultimately, it is difficult to class Coetzee's fiction in any one school. After all, who can say with confidence what exactly his style can be termed as: is it late modernism or realism, literal or allegorical? Novels range from the highly allegorical (the most salient example being the Nobel Lecture) to the seamlessly realistic (Disgrace) transcending the genre (Elizabeth Costello) and writing against it (Foe).

[12] Derrida also becomes a significant figure when these authors discuss the body. This is ironic since it is not a central theme in his writings, but it is in an indirect manner that this comes about: part of the reason for this is no doubt the French philosopher's unflinching approach to matters of difficulty in meaning, and the difficulty of meaning is heightened when the body is described, since the body seems to tend towards what Derrida calls "aporia" in its resistance to language and signification.

& Times of Michael K, as a factor in Coetzee's work. Helgesson's stance implies that the body acts in a political sense as "the other". He contrasts Coetzee to Nadine Gordimer and Njabulo Ndebele in his response to the political vicissitudes of South Africa at the time of the composition of the novels. Another significant approach to Coetzee's writing, especially with regard to the body, is Rosemary Jolly's Colonization, Violence and Narration in White South African Writing (1996) in which she recognises the body's importance in commentaries on subjecthood, otherness, and narration.

And yet, despite the widening of parameters or reading grids (psychoanalysis to post colonialism to postmodernism), the focus of and the argument for a writing that plays out conflicts have become clearer. This evolution can be read alongside the extraordinary political changes in South Africa over the past thirty years. The sense of isolation of the 1970s and the lonely throne of the coloniser are mirrored clearly in the first two novels Dusklands and In the Heart of the Country, whereas the end of the apartheid regime (both waxing and waning) could explain the location of three novels in South Africa: Life & Times of Michael K (1983), Age of Iron (1990) and Disgrace (1999), while Coetzee's turning to material with literally no mention of South Africa in the last novels (Elizabeth Costello (2002) and Slow Man (2005), and at the same time emigrating from South Africa, has engendered criticism focussed on themes set in another location.[13]

[13] The two intertextual works, Foe (1987) and The Master of Petersburg (1994), can be classed apart as they look back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and break with a pattern of contemporary social commentary we find in the other novels.

At this point the argument could take one of two directions. One would be to assume that the object of this study, namely the body, [14] has been part of the changes that have shaped the writings and that it has developed and grown in response to these changes. The other direction would be away from a social reading to show that the body has resisted the changes. It should be pointed out that these directions are not necessarily exclusive or contradictory (this concept in itself is important to understand: Coetzee is not offering solutions but dramatising conflicts), since there is clearly an aspect of both to be found; it is more a question of weighing the relative merits.

There have been a limited number of papers on the specific issue of the body in the fiction of JM Coetzee. In late 2005, only thirty-one titles surfaced from the NELM (National English Literary Museum) database operating off the keywords "body" and "Coetzee" out of nine hundred and eighty-seven entries when the words "Coetzee" and "criticism" were entered. There were only three entire studies on the body with the word "body" in the title that focus entirely on the body. The only dissertation or thesis I could find closely focussed on the body in Coetzee to date was Florence Pannetier's Master's thesis "The Body in JM Coetzee's Novels" (1994/5), whilst Brian May's article "J.M. Coetzee and the Question of the Body" (2001) remains one of the single most corporeal analyses of Coetzee. "Turning the Screw: Sex, Torture and Fetishism as Experiential

[14] Any phenomenologist would object to this statement because, as Merleau-Ponty argues, the body is not an object but part of the perceiving apparatus (La Phénoménologie 106). However, Coetzee's fiction objectifies the body to a large extent and does not follow this logic. This is shown throughout the chapter on space.

Allegory in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians"* (2000) by Jonathan Dewar uses the body in an innovative reading of what Hayden White calls "fetishism".

Florence Pannetier's Master's dissertation on the body in Coetzee, "The Body in JM Coetzee's Novels" (1994/1995), completed at the University of Bourgogne, uses the body as a trope for the transcendence (and, in the opposite sense, endorsement) of themes such as master-servant relationships and, to a lesser extent, the boundaries of language. It is by no means the only response to Coetzee based on historical and social argument and can be seen as an example of the tendency in Coetzeean reception to focus on the social body rather than the organic one. We must, however, remember that the reader's urge to project, to allegorise, to find meaning and particularly social or historical meaning in description, is not met with simple imagery in the Coetzeean representation of the body in the text, particularly when it comes to the body. As Sarah Nuttall points out

> much work on the post-colonial body has focused on what could be called macro-processes of the embodied self: the body of the self in relation to [...] the body as a site of multiple political and social inscriptions [...]. It has left aside the body as flesh and bones, as soft and hard, as surface and volume: the body as densely packed interior – liver, kidneys, heart, cavities, vessels, fluids – and as breath, odour-like, beyond the material (Nuttall 37).

In her essay "Bodiographies: writing the body in Arthur Nortje" (2004), Nuttall concludes that "Nortje's work brings into focus not only the lived body [but also a body

that] exists beyond the inscription of the social" (51): she forces the reader to rethink the body beyond the social. The body is above all a response to the social reading more than an endorsement of it; it is a means of viewing the politicised world from a new vantage-point. [15]

Pannetier's study is a step towards a more complete analysis of the body in Coetzee, but necessarily without more recent works such as Boyhood, Disgrace and Elizabeth Costello and Slow Man brought into focus, the study has perforce not brought the soma to its full recognition in the opus. [16]

Brian May's article, published in volume 47 of Modern Fiction Studies, insists on bringing the body to the "foreground" (May 392). In the article May works off In the Heart of the Country and Waiting for the Barbarians to show how Coetzee's bodies are tropes for the colonised self (May 403) and "blankness" (407). This particular feature, deriving from Levinas, is also evoked by Stephan Helgesson in Writing in Crisis. The analysis concludes with the idea of the empowered body (whether it speaks or not): "bodies, whether they "speak" or not, find a way to announce their presence, primacy and power" (416).

[15] Nuttall turns to Coetzee briefly in her opening chapter "Flesh and Blood", stating that he "has long invited the question of the body in his critical work [thus protecting] the body colonized by narrative, including postcolonial narrative" (51). It is in this vein that this thesis will treat the Coetzeean body: as "beyond the inscription of the social".

[16] The study concludes on the body in pain as the ultimate dramatisation of the political: "in Coetzee's novels [she argues], the imagery of the body illustrates the fundamental unease and the obsessions that pervade South African minds and literary creation too" (Pannetier 119). Although the statement may seem gratuitous, she shrugs off Coetzee's statement on the body that he elicits in Doubling the Point (248), made in a politically charged place (Jerusalem) at politically charged times (South Africa under PW Botha) is understandably with emphasis on the suffering body – this suffering making a corporeal statement.

May's article moves away from this into a conclusion that celebrates the body's voice in more oblique terms. For instance, he insists that "the body is not that which just defies the mind" (393); he urges "that we not subordinate the question of the body to another question – for example the more typically 'postcolonial' question of empire" (393) and declares that the body in Coetzee is not "merely [...] a means of characterizing something else".

May goes on to show how Magda is self-conscious of her body's role in history, "constituted by her domestic functions" (403) in the masculine utilitarian parameters of social existence, thus somewhat undermining his own assertion that the body is more than a site of historico-political significance. Although May's analysis resists a social reading (whilst, paradoxically, falling into it), what the body *does* represent for May is less clear than what it *does not* represent.[17] May is not the only one to fall into this type of litotes: we shall see how terminology of the body tends to be directed towards "the other" (Mike Marais), "aporia" (Attridge) and other words with connotations of that which is not. This coincides with Franz Fanon's profound statement: "la conaissance du corps est une activité uniquement négatrice" (Fanon Peau Noire, Masques Blancs 109) and elicits one of the most salient features of all of the Coetzeean body: its simple otherness as it is perceived in and by the mind.

[17] In addition to these reservations, it could be argued that two novels are not enough to characterise Coetzee's treatment of the body, especially if one considers the diversity of the works in their meaning and direction. Had May brought Life & Times of Michael K and Disgrace, for instance, into his analysis, the outcome may well have taken a different, less surrealistic direction.

But the body is not simply "that which is not" (Doubling the Point 248). Coetzee says it himself in his Jerusalem speech: there is a substance created by the frequency of narrative focus that makes it more than a negation. One paper in particular, "Turning the Screw: Sex, Torture and Fetishism as Experiential Allegory in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*" by Jonathan Dewar, explores the body at close range as an active signifier. In this piece Dewar uses the fetish-as-trope, as developed by Hayden White, as a powerful manner of representing the link between reader and text through embodiment:

> This is not an argument for psychological criticism, per se, but rather an assertion that more attention should be paid to the peculiarities of the magistrate's actions, how these peculiarities resonate throughout the novel […]. The blood, shit, piss, and vomit are meant to soil us on a metaphorical level, but there is also a complicity in being soiled: we are active participants even as observers. This, too, plays into the notion of fetishism. As such, the magistrate's narrative must be scrutinized through a fetishistic lens to truly begin to unpack its complexities (Dewar 3/4).

Dewar's view of the body as fetish-as-trope uses the body as a trope that goes well beyond its function as simple metaphor. Dewar insists on what he calls the magistrate's "peculiarities". This bizarreness or strangeness is very much centred on the body and, as this thesis aims to illustrate, the defamiliarised body. However, to disagree with Dewar on one important point, this thesis argues that it is precisely the peculiar, strange, unfamiliar aspect of Coetzee's writing revealed through his treatment of the body that

makes him notably unique as a writer, for there is no reason why the treatment of the body should be "reconciled with socio-political allegorical readings".

I mention these studies before discussing the body in the light of larger schools because they share a common goal: to recognise the body as a source of meaning worthy of an entire study in itself. Integrated in the rest of the thesis we will see how the majority of Coetzee's readers and critics follow established historicist and psychoanalytical axes that do not do justice to the singular corporeality of the body that we find in Coetzee, something that these papers did, at least, attempt. All of these teleological studies of the body are different from my own as they still describe the body as metaphorical (although May's article moves away from this the most) whereas this thesis uncovers an auto-signifying body. [18]

The fact that May runs into obscure wording and Dewar resorts to the idea of fetishism[19] is not surprising, for Coetzee locates the body in strange and unfamiliar territory that necessitates study outside of a more traditional approach. Here is a further reinforcement for the argument of a poetics as style of my study. The poetic approach to literature accounts for "strangeness" and "peculiarity" of its content in a less restricted manner, causing the critic to search for a less conventional term to lay bare the device at work. The lexical field I employ in the following chapters to describe Coetzee's treatment of the

[18] I will apply – in part - Deleuzean, Merleau-Pontyan and Scarryan readings to parts of the body in the next chapters to show how JM Coetzee writes against authority and convention and defamiliarises the body.

[19] "Fetishism" proper – not in the sexual or Marxist sense – implies that objects are endowed with magical powers: a far cry from the literal presentation of the body classed as "event" by Attridge (J.M. 39).

body (zero degree physiognomy, endoscope, inverted fable and kinetic poetics) is a creative response to the innovative and highly original technique Coetzee uses.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to explain what my own argument is and then to discuss to what extent and how the body has been recognised in Coetzee scholarship. The majority of responses to the fiction have not been centered on the body as primary focus but more on questions of history, language and meaning with ancillary discussion of the body as part of these themes. A basic "problem of authority" (Attwell J.M. 23) in the writings of Coetzee has pushed critics into innovative reading strategies: Attwell tells us in J.M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing (1993) that he – Attwell in his approach to the text - follows a "path that respects the fiction's own symptomatics" (23).

Ideas such as agency and literature in the event certainly give the body an important role, but they do not look to it as source of meaning. This is a fundamental difference in this thesis' approach to the body and the Derridean, Lacanian approach in that the semiotics I am discussing is not ineffable or meaningless. Unlike the postmodernist tendency which sees the body as an alternative to meaning, this thesis will argue from the next chapter onwards that the body is a visceral undeniable presence that is thoroughly defamiliarised.

The body in Coetzee's fiction is not a topic that has been fully exploited, which gives this study a certain freedom, but a certain responsibility too. As we now enter the topic of the

body proper, we must remember that as a poetic response to the literature, my analysis is selective and subjective, but it aims to be substantiated and legitimate in discussing this crucial theme.

Chapter Two: Representing the Body

The body can be studied in a classical sense through the fiction as a counterpoint, a motif, but its significance and function as a symbol in the text remain first and foremost, and constantly, linked to the mere reality of its physical presence. "There is something physical in confronting the poem in the original, something about the words themselves, in their own brute presence" ("Homage" 5) says Coetzee, responding to the poetry of Rainer Maria Rilke. In the same article he explains how he developed his own hermetic response to the canon, engaging with readers such as William Faulkner, Samuel Beckett and Ezra Pound in a highly physical manner.[20] If the reader takes this into account when reading Coetzee's fiction, the body becomes an important, even dominating theme.

The first half of this chapter will explore how Coetzee's bodies are presented as strange and how unique literary strategies such as embodiment, blurring the face and focussing on the body's interior exemplify the idea of defamiliarisation, but also invite a new reading of the body. The second half of the chapter will analyse the role of pain in defining the body through passages that create such a sharp visceral reaction in the reader that their echo can be termed "mimetic", as purely physical self-defining apogees of pain without overt denotative value, paradoxically furthering this idea of strangeness or defamiliarisation.

[20] In this article Coetzee describes his reading of Rilke "as though the image were a kind of amnion through which the idea was bursting into life" (5)

Embodiment

A key vector orientating the reader towards Coetzee's style is Elizabeth Costello who, in her speech on the Scandia is, in many ways, acting as a spokesperson for the writer. Her function is to give theoretical explanation for his visceral style in her interpretation of realism: "[r]ealism has never been comfortable with ideas. It could not be otherwise: realism is premised on the idea that ideas have no autonomous existence, can exist only in things. [...] characters give voice to contending ideas and thereby in a certain sense embody them" (Elizabeth Costello 9).

By situating the lesson in a story, told by an inter-diegetic narrator[21], Coetzee creates a framework that allows the narrator to gain the substance of a character. Elizabeth Costello is written into the fiction not only as a voice, but as a body. This way, the reader associates her discourse with what (s)he is told of her body. She goes on: "[t]he notion of embodying turns out to be pivotal. In such debates Ideas do not and indeed cannot float free: they are tied to the speakers by whom they are enounced, and generated from the matrix of individual interests out of which their speakers act in the world" (9). Indeed, ideas cannot be disassociated from the fleshy substance from whence they come.

During her lecture on "The Poets and the Animals" in Elizabeth Costello, Costello contrasts Rilke's treatment of a panther, where "animals stand for human qualities" and "[t]he panther is there as a stand-in for something else, dissolved into a dance of energy

[21] By this I mean a character who narrates the story from within that selfsame story, as such both an actor and a teller (see Gerard Genette's Figures 3 (1972), pages 72, 238 -239, 240 – 241).

around a centre" (Elizabeth 50) to the treatment of the same animal by Ted Hughes. "In these poems we know the jaguar not from the way he seems but from the way he moves. The body is as the body moves, or the currents of life move within it. The poem asks us to imagine our way into that way of moving" (51). This position corresponds, to a certain extent, with Shklovsky's definition of defamiliarisation (or "making strange"), a technique whereby "one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone stony" (Shklovsky 12).

It is difficult to put down a book like Disgrace, Dusklands, Life & Times of Michael K or In the Heart of the Country without feeling that a voice has been "embodied" in us through the reading; we are drawn to "imagine our way into [the character's] way" and this is most often achieved through the uncanny descriptions of the body and the body's behaviour.

To apply this idea of embodiment in a more creative way to Life & Times of Michael K as an example, the reader can trace this embodiment in the lexis as the style is highly charged in phonological choice of verbs of involuntary reaction: the novel is studded with the word "shiver" and its onomatopoeic associates, "shudder", "tremble" "shake(n)". These words resonate with the reader and allow a response to the literature that is seemingly unthinking or unconscious and very different to the intellectual quality of his writings: the operative "shudder" is a good example of this type of imagery.

In general the body is observed closely but with a dispassionate clarity that hinges on strictly physical elements. As we embark on Michael K's peregrinations, various stages of fever, "nausea" and quasi-starvation are described. His "lip curls" and his "nostril gape[s]" (30), he is mugged by two men who leave him with "a slash across his arm, a dislocated thumb and two broken ribs" (4), when he jogs he takes "pleasure in the soundness of his heart, the strength of his limbs"(19), he strokes the arms of his mother when she falls into fits, she has "scratch marks" on her "thighs and arms" (7).

As Michael K's peregrinations ensue, his lack of eating and sleeping patterns are described in an array of images, sleeping "curled up like a cat" (32), letting it settle "inside his head like a benign fog" (34), it is "intermittent" (38), "fitful" (53); he pretends to sleep, can sleep anywhere, does it with children climbing over him, "his mouth agape" (50).

The basic language used in these examples is of particular phonological eloquence: the stressed syllables tend to be trochees or dactyls ("shiver", "shudder", "nostril", "broken", "huddled", "fitful", "scratch marks") and strong monosyllabic stresses that are, in many ways, the most consistent element of style ("slash", "roots", "bulbs", "cat", "fog", "poke", "prod" and "clench" with its onomatopoeic power). The effect of this lexical field is more sensorial than symbolic.

In these examples the perception of the body is increased through a poetic style that does not associate the body with a social meaning, but rather brings it to life by giving it its

own, fresh language. Michael K "speaks" through the dislocated actions of his body rather than through any structured discourse. Lacan insists that speaking is as necessary for thought as writing (Seminar XVII, "L'envers de la psychanalyse" (1969 -1970)), implying that the living act of utterance, possible only through a body, needs to be valorised more openly in our understanding of the self.[22]

The body's utterances are not hidden in Coetzee but used to enhance its strangeness. Magda, in In the Heart of the Country, tells us: "I am spoken to not in words, which come to me quaint and veiled, but in signs, in conformations of face and hands, in postures of shoulders and feet, in nuances of tune and tone, in gaps and absences whose grammar has never been recorded" (8).

The utterance of the body is recorded by the magistrate as he describes his own torture: "[f]rom my throat comes the first mournful dry bellow, like the pouring of gravel" (Waiting 132). The strong acoustic image of pouring gravel, extremely dehumanising, is just one example of many of how Coetzee defamiliarises the body. By giving the body a sound, Coetzee is developing its presence in the fiction, even if the sound does not constitute language pure but utterance. The distinct image of pouring gravel creates a dry, uncomfortable, rocky and heavy sensation in the reader, especially when read in conjunction with the mention of the throat. Gravel pouring out of a throat is a powerful image that sets off a more physical, internal reaction in the reader – swallowing - than an abstract idea.

[22] Lacan is a valuable touchstone for the reader confronting the novel Foe because the relationship between language and the subconscious is at the centre of Susan's involvement with Friday: she tries to make him surface to the level of speech while he remains under the metaphoric ocean of the extra-lingual.

Embodiment, therefore, is a radical idea that involves physical transfer from character to reader. The reading experience alone can only go so far since we are constantly brought back to the mirror of ourselves in the text. We are continually reminded of the distinct elusiveness of the body, how it cannot be dissected and evaluated, just as our own bodies, sealed off from the exterior by the surface of skin, escape us.

More recent works (The Lives of Animals, Youth, Elizabeth Costello and Slow Man) emphasise less physical agony (excepting Slow Man) and suggest more philosophical and artistic problems of trying to traduce the sensorial. "Does the mind by nature prefer sensation to ideas, the tangible to the abstract?" (Elizabeth 24) asks Elizabeth Costello. Paul Rayment's answer is unequivocal:

> from the touch of the hands he learns all he needs to know: that Marijana does not find this wasted and increasingly flabby body distasteful, that she is prepared, if she can, and if he will permit it, to transmit to him through her fingertips a fair quantum of her own ruddy good health (Slow Man 63).

The idea of embodiment as a 'means to knowledge' is expressed in many of the novels: "[i]t is a world of words that creates a world of things" (146) claims the mysterious voice the schizoid Magda hears in In the Heart of the Country. Fyodor Mikhailovich considers Pavel's death as something that has taken place inside his own body: "Pavel's death does not belong to Pavel – that is just a trick of language. As long as he is here, Pavel's death is his death. Wherever he goes he bears Pavel with him, like a baby blue with cold" (The

Master 81). Michael K, recognising Robert's way of thinking in him asks the question: "Would he have to say that the thought was Robert's and had merely found a home in him, or could he say that though the seed had come from Robert, the thought, having grown inside him, was now his own? (95). In The Lives of Animals the idea is emphasised further. "Here we approach a rooting in the corporeal and mortal as a means of understanding the differences (or similarities) between not only the lives of humans and animals, but between the lives of humans and gods too" (Hook 1).

However, re-establishing the corporeal as boundary and generator of identity does not only mean a movement away from the cerebral world. We are still, in many cases, rooted in language and history (particularly with Elizabeth Costello); indeed, the endeavour becomes one in which the truistic, axiomatic mental world is suggested in physical terms:

> [s]he too is not without curiosity about the intercourse of gods and mortals […]. What intrigues her is less the metaphysics than the mechanics, the practicalities of congress across a gap in being. Bad enough to have a full-grown male swan jabbing webbed feet into your backside while he has his way, or a one-ton bull leaning his moaning weight on you; how, when the god does not care to change shape but remains his awesome self, does the human body accommodate itself to the blast of his desire? (184).

This is one example of many showing how Coetzee ingeniously inverts the orthodox pattern of physical effect from metaphysical cause, and implies the incompatibility and

contradictory nature of myth (as well as Western science) in terms of the body. The image of weight and the specifics of the 'webbed feet' break through the abstract, genteel picture of the god's love. Later in the same lesson, entitled "Eros", Elizabeth Costello gives the Immaculate Conception a deeply and even grotesquely physical description: "it must have been like being fucked by the Leviathan" (187). In this case Coetzee defamiliarises the iconic through the erotic.

This distinct method of humanising the godly is utilised by Costello to give us a feeling of the idea rather than mere exegetical connotation. We live the mythopoeic and not the mythological in the prose. The uneasy relationship between the metaphysical and the physical is enhanced through the body's strangeness.

In each of these examples Coetzee suggests that "embodiedness" is a chemico-psychic reality, not simply an idea: there is a type of transfer of energy from one medium to the other through the concrete imagery. The reader engenders, harbours and internalises the forms presented in the text. This transfer from the reader into a fictional centre of consciousness is brought about most acutely when the sensations deriving from the organism are emphasised: the body becomes the garden where these forms take root and flower.

Zero degree Physiognomy

If we turn again to the descriptions of bodies, and this time more specifically to the face, a singular pattern is evident. Since the face is traditionally the primary site of meaning when it comes to the body in semiotics and literature, it is the first part that Coetzee covers up. All of Coetzee's novels have at their centres faceless individuals whose physiognomy is only described partially, like the reflection of a face in a broken mirror.

The face is at the centre of representation in the majority of Western novels, the eyes are privileged as gates to the interior of the character, the brow, hair, cheekbones and nose are standards of beauty, vectors of the prejudices of the times and metaphors for the inner self.[23] By denying characters the connotative and symbolic potential a facial description offers, the atmosphere of most Coetzee novels is of a singularly elliptical form. We are stranded in a wasteland, desert island or heath, as it were, alone, without external references, and uncannily alienated from the comfortable, somewhat too neat world of the causal classical novel. Not unlike the paintings of Francis Bacon, faces are erased, leaving vacant spaces connected by minimalist descriptions of "dull", "dark" eyes. The magistrate's recurrent dreams of the faceless girl in the snow in Waiting for the Barbarians express this idea, as do the lightly sketched rapists in Disgrace, the hidden

[23] To illustrate this vast paradigm, one only has to look at the traditional canons of beauty in ancient Western history - at figures such as Cleopatra and Helen of Troy, known for physiognomic traits - not to mention stereotypical facial metonyms used to denote entire peoples such as the Roman and Jewish nose, and gypsy eyes. Masks, mosaics and status of distant historical figures such as Tuthenkamoun, Agamemnon and Alexander the Great have left the collective mindset with distinct features as recognisable emblems of entire historical periods and artists such as Da Vinci, Caravaggio and Picasso have further reinforced a distinctly physiological world, flanked by common idioms such as "the eyes are the windows to the soul". Generally, standards of beauty are overwhelmingly facial such as cheekbone structure, lip thickness, the contour of the chin , the state of teeth, the symmetry of the nose, the colour of the eyes and hair and so on.

Marianna in Slow Man and the barely recognisable characters Michael K meets in the labour camp. One is reminded of the phantom personages in the Kafka trilogy; a strong human presence can be identified but the physical detail is greatly reduced.

The opening paragraph of the first novel is a description of colonel Joll. "He has the skin of a younger man"(1) is the only physiognomic information the magistrate narrator gives away, since the focus of the prose is on his glasses: "two little discs of glass suspended in front of his eyes like loops of wire [...]".

The disks are dark, they look opaque from the outside", he "does not remove the dark glasses". Instead of following the normal method of development of physical description as a means of characterisation, the narrator uses the glasses as a signal: as the novel's plot unfolds we will see the "dark", "opaque" demeanour of the colonel and the magistrate will be "suspended" in a type of "loop" (noose). This foreshadowing is not the only function of the passage; it also sets the tone of the novel: one of enigma and dark introspection, voyeurism and scrutiny, for later the magistrate will perceive his own reflection within the lenses of Joll when he inspects the barbarian girl's eyes (Waiting 44). The eyeless Joll and the barbarian girl represent the two extremes of the magistrate's ethical and ontological spectrum.[24]

Lost in this eyeless (hence, faceless) world, the magistrate sees himself not in any natural detail of the barbarian girl's opaque eye, but reflected in the strange caterpillar (scar) he

[24] "Eyeglasses, microscopes, telescopes and cameras are, as Freud notes in passing in *Civilisation and its Discontents*, projected materializations of the *lens* of the human eye" (Scarry 282).

detects: “the caterpillar comes to an end, decapitated, at the pink inner rim of the eyelid” (31). Like the faceless person, the caterpillar is a headless body.

In the same novel the magistrate has recurring dreams of a child building a snowman: [a]t first he is unable to imagine her face (10); later, he peers around and sees a face “blank, featureless; it is the face of an embryo or a tiny whale; it is not a face at all but another part of the human body” (37). In the next dream, fearing disappointment, he looks at her again, but this time he sees that “she is herself, herself as I have never seen her, a smiling child, the light sparkling on her teeth and glancing from her jet-black eyes”(53). The implications are clear: through the sequence of dreams, the child acquires greater definition, offering herself as an achieved individuality “[…] the logical end reached by the semiotic disarrangement effected on (the) imperial teleology” (Attwell J.M. 81). [25]

But the face is not always hidden completely. The technique of highlighting few features of the face can be found when Susan Barton describes Friday, in their first encounter, as “the flat face, the small dull eyes, the broad nose, the thick lips, the skin not black but a dark grey ...[with] springy hair” (6). All she says of Cruso is that he has green eyes and “hair burnt to a straw colour” (8). Every feature she mentions in Friday is a point of difference with her own self, this is not a description as such but a negative portrayal of the stereotypical slave, identifiable by the very racial traits she mentions. The only bridge

[25] The hidden face gains clarity gradually through the unravelling of the plot. This larger pattern of delayed emergence, as Attwell points out, cannot emerge in the constrictive “real” space of the Empire and does so in a type of “virtual space” (in this case the magistrate’s dream world).

into a deeper relationship is in the eyes, but they are “small and dull”. Cruso, on the other hand, is blonde and has green (and later yellow) eyes, so the reader can deduce his race, but nothing more. The constant, outside of the historico-discursive traducing, is that it is difficult to visualise the character. The child who is ostensibly Susan Barton’s daughter has a “round face and a little O of a mouth” (75), her eyes are “grey”, her fingers “plump” and “unformed” (76). The metonymic structure and simple delineations of form are like (even if John says that “writers are not like painters” (11)) an etching rather than a composite image. The blurred sketches are the unformed characters.

In Disgrace, David Lurie’s eroticised centre of consciousness does not focus so much on the face as the body and then only sketchily. Soraya is described as “tall and slim, with long black hair and dark, liquid eyes”, her boys too have the “lustrous hair and dark eyes” (6). She has a “honey-brown body, unmarked by the sun” (1); Melanie is “small and thin, with close-cropped black hair, wide, almost Chinese cheekbones, large dark eyes” (11). Soon this description gives way to a narrative focussed primarily on her body: “One moment stands out in recollection, when she hooks a leg around his buttocks to draw him in closer: as the tendon of her inner thigh tightens against him, he feels a surge of joy and desire” (29).

All of these examples are directly influenced by the focaliser, David Lurie, who enacts his idealised erotic clichéd fantasies through what he sees, selecting the sexual, exotic and aesthetic details that enthral him the most. From a psychoanalytic perspective, we could argue that David Lurie chooses not to see the full face for he is in denial of an

elementary guilt that would express itself through facial expressions and the complicated interaction such a detailed sight would encourage. He describes Melanie as "young, and perfectly formed" (30) and reflects on his past self in terms of "height", "good bones" and "olive skin" (7). On subconscious and conscious levels David Lurie is aspiring to platonic forms of perfection in the realm of the physical, [26] as he sees a chamber opera as the perfect mode for his work on Byron (Disgrace 4). But like Plato's forms, they are hidden, in this case by the broad brushstrokes that Coetzee uses as a stylist.[27]

If opacity and subtlety of depiction with hidden metonymic structure are threads when describing the face, then the memorable opening page of Life & Times of Michael K is a key example of them at work: "The lip curled like a snail's foot, the left nostril gaped"(1), grotesque in itself, is presented as "pink flesh". The analogy with the snail is symbolic in more ways than one: it represents Michael K's "sluggish" manner, his fragility and homelessness (snail's shell): the snail leaves a trail behind and can be caught easily; the voice Michael K hears at Prince Albert relays his connection with the *spiritus mundi* of the earth. Coetzee takes the seemingly realist analogy and simultaneously draws symbolic and allegorical parallels.

Michael K's mother, Anna, in Life & Times of Michael K, is not given any physical description beyond the bald statement that she "had been suffering from the gross swelling of the legs and arms, later her belly had begun to swell too" (5), we know

[26] This reminds us of Attwell's comments on the virtual space needed for the barbarian girl to have an identity in the dreams of the magistrate: as if to say that the pure face is a form and not what we see.
[27]Boehmer's paper "Coetzee's Queer Bodies(y)", given at the 2005 AUETSA conference discusses John's "remarkable admission to an early adolescent love of Grecian form" (2).

nothing of the puzzling photograph of the Khamieskroon killer Michael K is infatuated with other than what seems to be a "smile of quiet achievement" (17) on the lips. Visagie's grandson is merely a "pale plump young man" (60) and even the second part narrator cannot offer a more expansive physical account of Michael K than to say that he looks like "a little old man" (129). However, given his medical, specialised viewpoint, he does elaborate on specific symptoms of disorder and comments that there is "every evidence of prolonged malnutrition: cracks in his skin, sores on his hands and feet, bleeding gums. His joints protrude, he weighs less than forty kilos". Later we learn that he has a "simple incomplete cleft, with some displacement of the septum. The palate intact" (130).

This voice is parodying that of medical authority and technique, even if the reader is given precise information about Michael K's physical condition, the face and eyes remain hidden. Coetzee is blanketing the normative (the face) and revealing the marginal (skin, joints, gums), an inversion of the trend in orthodox western literature where, as Foucault shows, it is the body that is blanketed.[28]

The reader notes how the selectivity of detail in the description of Michael K is a reflection on the centre of consciousness (or, if applicable, as is the case in the second part of Life & Times of Michael K, the narrator). The medical officer sees Michael K as a patient; his vision is filtered by the rational, empowered discourse of medicine. So even if we are given more substance, the essence of Michael K will not be relayed through any classical physiognomic description. However, the narrator's gaze moves towards the

[28] The History of Sexuality1: The Will to Knowledge (1976).

inside of the body and thus offers a more revealing analysis of his health, an important factor in the novel.

Hence the body is described in a style that could be termed elliptical, not in the Genettian sense where it refers to time structure, but in as much as the body is never whole. Whilst the descriptions of the face and the outside are relatively unadventurous (the ransom of a highly succinct style), the descriptions of the interior, however, are singularly potent and most certainly do ascribe to the principle of defamiliarisation if one considers the strange, violent light in which they are depicted.

The Body's Interior: Endoscope

To illustrate the way Coetzee describes the inside of the body, we can turn momentarily to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari for a few words on the context of the perception of the body. Their seminal study Anti-Oedipus (1972), a psychoanalytic and Marxist reading of schizophrenia and capitalism, focusses on the body as something that has been sublimated by a machine-like desire for productivity. The result of this is that the subject refuses to see the body as it really is (full of organs), but as an abstract entity that has no inside and exists as a type of machine. This is because, fundamentally, the subconscious is structured like a machine, what they call a desiring-machine ("machine désirante").The analysis is poetic and extremely dense. Human bodies have become, on the outside, either "paranoid machines" or "miraculous machines" or "repulsive machines" (17) that engage with the inside in a battle for authority (15). The overarching thesis is that capitalism

creates a type of normalized schizophrenia whereby the mind silences the body and stops imagining it beyond its skin.[29]

The study uses Antonin Artaud's words "le corps n'a pas besoin d'organe" (15), meaning "the body has no need for organs", to demonstrate how the human will transcends the body's truths in its search for a seamless, artificial world. This idea is compounded by the description of Mandel as "the kind of man who drives his body like a machine" (Waiting 77) and of Joll as someone with a young skin and a mechanical, immaculate presence. Unlike the physically limited soma of the magistrate, these oppressors come across, like the discourse of history, as well-sealed and almost unnaturally impeccable. Joll in particular is a perfect example of Deleuze's desiring machine.

However, in most cases, we see the exact inverse. Coetzee opens the body and uses the hitherto hidden organs to shock the reader into a new understanding of the body. Furthermore, as Sarah Dove Heider argues in her paper "The Timeless Ecstasy of Michael K" (where K comes to represent a Deleuzean nomad), there is an "unallegorizability" in the fiction of J.M. Coetzee due to a "consciousness unaffected by many of the main currents of modernity, including modernity's emphasis on generalized norms, its preoccupation with measuring and exploitation of time, and its sense of the importance of profit and progeny" (Attridge J.M. 49).

[29] Most of these points are made in part two ("Le corps sans organs") of the first chapter, "Les machines désirantes" (Deleuze Anti 15 -22).

If defamiliarisation is "to increase the difficulty and length of perception" (Shklovsky 12), then Coetzee can be read as using this technique by increasing the perception of the organs – usually glossed over - to deconstruct the mythological expectation of the body without organs. I have termed this technique "endoscope"[30]. For now, we should simply note that Coetzee's bodies can be read in a Deleuzean light to the effect that they rebel against the normative (modern capitalist) portrayal of a body immaculate, deconstructing this with their spillage, fluids and general messiness.[31]

In Boyhood the reader is guided through twenty chapters without a single, cohesive physiognomic description. All we learn of the mother figure is that she is "restless" (2), she buys a bicycle and "staggers about in a silly way", but when she does ride she looks "young and fresh and mysterious" (3). As for the father, he is described almost uniquely as a voice, and it is only at the end that we are allowed a peep at a man who "has not shaved [...] there is a red V at his throat where sunburn gives way to the pallor of his chest. Beside the bed is a chamber pot in which cigarette-stubs float in brownish urine" (159). Mr Lategan, John's woodwork teacher "is a little man with close-cropped hair that stands upright, and a moustache. One of his thumbs is missing: the stub is neatly covered over with a purple scar" (8).

[30] "Medical instrument for examining the interior of the hollow organs such as the stomach or bowel" (Collins Dictionary 471).
[31] The body immaculate would be best illustrated in reference to the depiction of the body in Renaissance art (see the work of Botticelli, Michelangelo and Mantegna). Coetzee's defamiliarised bodies are completely different, reminding one of the endoscope of Corot, the visceral character of Bosch and the hazy threatening physiognomy of Francis Bacon.

The “purple scar” and “brownish urine” are the most descriptive elements in these examples, these transitional zones from outside to inside act as defamiliarising agents in a world where the sign is broken down. John sees the inside with far more descriptive powers in general. Whilst the narrator, focalising on John, deletes all explicit physical description of character, he dramatically adds colour, analogy, adjective and detail when a lamb is castrated:

> Ros moves amongst them, snatching lambs by the hind leg, one by one pressing them to the ground while they bleat in terror, one despairing wail after another, and slitting open the scrotum. His head bobs down, he catches the testicles in his teeth and tugs them out. They look like two little jellyfish trailing blue and red blood-vessels (98/99).

The elliptical description of external features of the body (“hind leg”, “scrotum”, “testicles”) is an artistic device deployed to shift or transfer the reader’s attention to the inside where the prose is more concentrated on sensorial effect (the testicles, once torn from their protective skin, are described in more detail, with the simile, the verb choice and the colour - a vivid “blue and red”). In simple terms we could say that the body is empowered inasmuch as it is given an inside (and colour) in an otherwise sealed (and colourless) world.

The simple grotesque quality of the passage is not an atypical feature of the writing when it turns to the inside of the body. Its interior is frequently abject to its owner (the mind

and the soul): in the eyes of the mad narrator in part one of Dusklands, it becomes a grouping of autonomous monsters, independent of (and even belligerent to) the mind: "[f]rom head to foot I am the subject of a revolting body. Only the organs of my abdomen keep their blind freedom: the liver, the pancreas, the gut, and of course the heart, squelching against one another like unborn octuplets" (7).

The "blind" organs can be imagined, but the way Coetzee describes them they are visualised, and can be *felt* in alarmingly physical terms. Like the anemone in Foe and jellyfish in Boyhood, by using a metonym of the ocean again (the "octuplet" connotes the squid), Coetzee is presenting a natural, organic analogy to the reader. However, his choice of species is not common, and the organism seems to have been chosen for the exactitude of description and defamiliarising effect it creates as a signifier. Compared to fish and mammals, the octopus family is particularly alien to humans. The most poignant strictly physiological transfer from text to reader in the example is contained in the verb "squelched". The word connotes a slithery, mucosal touching of surfaces that resonates in the reader in a deeply physical manner. Further still, the strange terms "unborn" and "octuplet", suggest that the organs of the body are autonomous from the body.

If we compare this last extract from Dusklands to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's thesis on the body without organs, we see a direct contradiction. If we compare it to a mechanical will (*la machine désirante*) taking control of the image of the body and hiding that which we cannot see, here the insides are presented and the unity of the machine in the mind succumbs to the real physical body, as separated organs. By having

organs, this body is defamiliarised from the anti-Oedipal conception of the body in one piece, without organs.

The idea of this coming as a shock is, on the other hand, thoroughly Deleuzean: Eugene Dawn, like the reader, is defamiliarised from the body because of its simple, alienating organic truth.

Generically, we see that certain fluids and organs of the interior have common metonymical functions, like the heart and blood, whilst others (the lungs, spleen, sperm, wounds) are rarer, more "specialised" symbols. Finally, there are the neglected organs, those that are hardly ever used as signifiers in literature. Organs common to species are used as symbols of transcendence, the uniting imagery of what lies "inside": "the great blue stomach, […] the intestines [...], the liver, the kidneys – all the things that a sheep has inside it and he [John] has inside him too"(Boyhood 98).[32]

There are other examples of how the use of colour and distinct animal similes contribute to the defamiliarising of the body's inside, but the idea of embodiment, when applied to the inside of the body, can have slightly different, but no less interesting results, especially as a defamiliarisation of sex:

> [m]y hand covers his man's part, held there by his hand; but my nerves are dull, I

[32] When more classical analogies are made, in the scope of metaphysics (and these passages are rarer), the bird (particularly the wing) and the dog are constants. These creatures are predominant in the study of the soul and death, as they are used in their ancient Egyptian and Sumerian forms as symbols of the afterlife (this is examined more comprehensively in chapters 7 and 9).

> am without curiosity, I feel only a dampness and softness […] so many tiny events, acts, movements one after another, muscles pulling bones this way and that […] blood flows. Two arms grapple […]. A body lies on top of a body pushing and pushing, trying to find a way in, motion everywhere (In the Heart 117).

In this excerpt we are faced with a brutal deconstruction of the body, how it is described from the inside (nerves, muscles, blood, bones) and strictly sensorial ("dampness and softness"). The economy of language presents the image in the purest form. The signifiers go from the external, through the sensorial to the internal in the development of his lexicon: "part", "hand" "nerves" "dampness", "softness", "bones", "muscles", "blood". We are boring into the centre with a microscope. Like Elizabeth Costello's discussion of Ted Hughes's panther, there is an emphasis on movement. The extract, as is so often the case in the Coetzee novel, is without identity other than that of the organism; all we know is that a "body lies on top of a body", and it does not seem to be a person "pushing" and trying to find a way in but an organism without an owner, a blind, autonomous will. We are very far from the classical description of eyes and facial expressions as paragons of intent and purpose. Here the libidinal and the corporeal express themselves blindly. By depriving the reader of an identifiable subject the sense of focus is drawn to the physical.

"To make visible the unseen can also mean a change of level, addressing oneself to a layer of material which hitherto had no pertinence for history and which had not been

recognised as having any moral, aesthetic or historic value[...]" says Gayatri Spivak in her article "Can the Subaltern Speak" (285). Indeed, when David Lurie decides to go back to Cape Town to ask forgiveness from the Isaacs family, he is recognising a part of his past that, during the first chapters of the novel, had no clearly defined moral value in his eyes. When seeking atonement at the Isaacs house, and therefore "making visible the [previously] unseen", he uses a corporeal image to represent his ethical situation: "[h]e has a vision of himself stretched out on an operating table. A scalpel flashes; from throat to groin he is laid open; he sees it all" (Disgrace 171).

Paul Rayment, the central character of Slow Man, who reminds the reader of David Lurie in his resistance to change, goes through a similar anagnorisis of the self when presented with endoscope: "[h]e had never thought of himself as frail until he saw the X-rays. He found it hard to believe that the spider-bones revealed in the plates could keep him upright" (Slow Man 17).

Endoscope as a device gives much leverage to the depiction of the body as it increases the length of perception of it as a subject by exploring parts of it that cannot usually be seen. In this way the body is emphasised and allows for a unique appreciation of its external and internal significance. The inner layers of the body plunge the reader into the universe of the strange and unfamiliar.

The Body in Pain

To come back to the seminal statement used as the epigraph to this study: in Doubling the Point, Coetzee explains:

> [i]f I look back over my own fiction I see a (simple-minded?) standard erected. That standard is the body. Whatever else, the body is the not "that which is not", and the proof that it is the pain that it feels. The body with its pain becomes a counter to the endless trials of doubt (Doubling 248).

The fact that Coetzee ends with the emphatic verb "takes" underscores the crux of his characters' dilemma: the body is a powerful force that can claim authority at any given moment.

With respect to these dynamics of the body in pain, the reader can turn to Elaine Scarry's The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World (1985). The study creates a poetical interpretation of the tortured body in literature and religious scripture. In her work she explains how its "unsharability" (4) makes the body in pain "resistant to language". These largely post-colonialist ideas are not altogether pertinent in a study of Coetzee since the body, when in a state of pain, represents a type of auto-signifying voice. Rather than standing outside of meaning without being "shared", it speaks its own strange language.

My argument in this section of the chapter is that if we bring the body in pain in Coetzee's fiction into focus, then we will see equally powerful corporeal statements that, if anything, do not support Scarry's thesis of unsharability. The defamiliarising treatment of the body can be understood well from these perspectives since the body is being given a renewed significance, a new texture and a new meaning.

Scarry's The Body in Pain interprets pain as one of the steps towards the "unmaking" of the body, as opposed to the structures of objectification and belief that construct it. Scarry reads the body from an historicist perspective, weaving elements of "artifacts", productivity, war, torture and religion to create a work that holds the body primarily as a metaphor for the imprint of history on the individual.

Scarry's reading of pain in Western literature is less of a literal translation of the body's expression and more of an abstract, theoretical debate on the representation of pain: the body "unmakes" the world around it through its convulsions but cannot "make" any plausible sense, since the language that must be employed to describe it in this state simultaneously subordinates it to a level of meaning that removes it from its essentially ineffable condition; hence the paradox of describing a body in pain to a reader, and through a voice, that is in a state of well-being. It will be noted on this broad point that Coetzee tends to describe pain in the event rather than in retrospect, this idea concurring within Derek Attridge's reading of the present tense in Coetzee's fiction. [33] Furthermore, Coetzee, in describing pain, does not lessen its mimetic power through the use of

[33] Indeed, the use of the present tense in all of the novels –what I refer to , like Gary Saul Morson, as "Kairova time" (see chapter 9) – furthers the argument of the body as a living body, readable only as far as the evident contingency and unfolding of events allow it to be: therefore strange and unpredictable.

language, as Scarry warns, but on the contrary, brings it into the realm of the fiction with strong images. Pain in Coetzee's literary universe is anything but ineffable.

At the same time, Coetzee's bodies experience a similar "unmaking" in their dramatisation. The world they express under the domain of pain deconstructs the historical context and throws the reader into the "incontestable reality" (Scarry 62) of the body.[34]

Consider the opening passage of Boyhood: the distant, ironic description of place surreptitiously homes in on an image of extraordinarily vivid physicality: "His mother takes the hens between her knees, presses on their jowls till they open their beaks, and with the point of a paring-knife picks at their tongues. The hens shriek and struggle, their eyes bulging. He shudders and turns away" (2).

By using an animal, the author is expressing the most radical form of "otherness" plausible. The link between animals and humans has to be redefined outside of the mediation of mental abstraction, through the "phenomenal" signifiers rather than the "noumenal" ones as Kant might put it. This is emphatically the case here since the verbs ("takes", "presses", "opens", "picks", "shriek", "struggle", "shudders"), the most powerful descriptive words in the extract, relay the sense of being from animal to character, and then from character to reader. The verb "bulging" is effective in creating a

[34] Scarry's insistence on how the body is broken down for social purposes in its "unmaking" ("[w]orld, self, and voice are lost, or nearly lost, through the intense pain of torture" (35)), is contradicted sharply with the example of the magistrate's torture in Waiting for the Barbarians when he remembers his encounter with the nomad in the desert with crystal clarity.

distinctly physical catharsis, or what Michiel Heyns (and Costello) calls the "sympathetic imagination"; we read the passage as if our own tongues were being picked at.

Susan Barton describes Friday's tongue in analogous terms: "I think of the root of his tongue closed behind those heavy lips like a toad in eternal winter and shiver [...] let us say that the sinews that move the tongue were cut" (57), "wagging and straining [...] like a worm cut in half contorting itself in death-throes" (119). The verbs "shiver" and "shudder" are the operative ones, as they echo the reader's sensation (outwards) and as well as the subject through the narrator (inside). [35] Here the simile of the toad gives such a vivid picture that the reader embodies the narrator's prejudice in shuddering, a verb Coetzee uses expressly in Slow Man (65, 105, 106) to describe physical communication.

Coetzee seems especially interested in amplifying pain, intent on translating its physicality to the reader: "I saw pictures in my mind of pincers gripping his tongue and a knife slicing into it" (Foe 24). Suffering is the discourse of the body; it is described in terms of its own immediacy, without hindrance: "[n]imbly, with hand and teeth, the boy begins unwrapping the rags that bandage his forearm. The last rounds, caked with blood and matter, stick to his flesh, but he lifts their edge to show me the red angry rim of the sore" (Waiting 4); David Lurie sees in Bev Shaw's Veterinary clinic "that the wound is alive" (82) and "the dog's eyes roll in terror" (80); when his hair is burnt, "the scalp is an angry pink" (96).

[35] Not unlike – and here I come back to the same image I evoke in the preface of this work - the way Foucault describes the Velasquez Las Meninas (1656) in the opening pages of The Order of Things (1970): a prismatic structure or mise en abîme.

The personification ("angry") is subtle in the examples, the wound, by being 'alive', and the verb "sticks" are especially sharp in relaying of the sense of pain. Another sense evoked in the description of pain in Waiting for the Barbarians is hearing: "I feel a terrible tearing in my shoulders as though whole sheets of muscle are giving way" (132). The precision of surrealistic imagery of the trope makes this description of pain particularly trenchant. In Slow Man, Coetzee stimulates other senses as he chooses to give pain a colour: white ("the right leg sends him a shaft of jagged white pain" (5)).

In his essay on Disgrace in *Interventions*, Attwell writes: "The only grounds available [for a "sense of value"], inevitably, are simply ontological, in the terms offered by the conditions which humanity shares with all the earth's creatures: the fact of a biological existence" (Attwell "Race" 339). However, in a brutal society the body, a simulacrum, finds a painful "biological existence" the only mode available to it: "pain is truth; all else is subject to doubt" (Waiting 5). The magistrate's experience of torture in Waiting for the Barbarians brings him to a grim realisation: "[w]hat I am made to undergo is subjection to the most rudimentary needs of my body" (126). The only truth is the body and an incoherent, groping mind, often in direct conflict with the will of the anatomy. The narrative voice of the magistrate goes on: "They [the torturers] were interested in demonstrating to me what it means to live in a body, *as a body* [my italics], a body which can entertain notions of justice only as long as it is whole and well" (26).

Put still more plainly, Coetzee is relating to his reader what it means to live and be aware of the frailty of life, under the sword of Damocles. One solution to this state of perpetual

anxiety is, instead of living in fear, to learn to appreciate and respect pain. If Lurie and the magistrate's behaviour borders on masochism, Magda's poetic illustration of her relationship with pain places it at the centre of human existence, the bridge between the body and the mind, the voice from the centre of existence:

> [p]leasure is hard to come by, but pain is everywhere these days, I must learn to subsist on it. [...] Sometimes the pain is a solid block behind the wall of my forehead, sometimes a disk within my skull tilting and humming with the movements of the earth, sometimes a wave that unrolls and thuds endlessly against the backs of my eyelids. I lie hour after hour listening to the sound inside my head. In a trance of absorption I hear the pulse in my temples, the explosion and eclipse of cells, the grate of bone, the sifting of skin into dust. [...] It is therefore with reluctance that I confront the groping of human desire. Clenched beneath a pillow in a dim room, focussed on the kernel of pain, I am lost in the being of my being (38).

The reader notes that Coetzee, usually so economical in his style, is far more liberal in his descriptions here, allowing listing and an array of senses – particularly the auditory - to communicate different aspects of pain. This increase in frequency corresponds to Shklovsky's definition of defamiliarisation in that the body is explored from a strange and unlikely perspective (as a body that absorbs the outside). It also seems clear that the passage is veering on the sadomasochistic, a theme that is played out openly in

Dusklands by the pleasure Jacobus procures from squeezing his carbuncle (Dusklands, 83, 89).

Rosemary Jolly's reading of Waiting for the Barbarians (Colonization, Violence and Narration in White South African Writing (1996)) explains how the magistrate "treats her [the barbarian girl's] body as a text that, if he pays it enough attention – if he "reads" it "properly" – will alert him to the truth behind the scene of the torture" (Jolly 127). Jolly goes on to quote Lucia Folena and points out, most adroitly, that "even if the accused offers a confession, torture is still necessary to the inquisitor as a text whereby he can provide himself with the physical proof of the prisoner's guilt" (128). Indeed, the magistrate realises this early on in the novel:

> [b]lank, like a fist beneath a black wig, the face grows out of the throat and out of the blank body beneath it, without aperture, without entry. […] But with this woman it is as if there is no interior, only a surface across which I hunt back and forth seeking entry. Is this how torturers felt hunting their secret, whatever they thought it was? For the first time I feel a dry pity for them: how natural a mistake to believe that you can burn or tear or hack your way into the secret body of the other! (Waiting 45/46).

The magistrate is foreshadowing his own destiny, how he too will fall into the mistake of trying to understand the secret body by literally throwing himself into the arms of the torturers so that he can embody the girl's experience (if we are to extend this reading, we

understand why he is dressed in a robe: the other has become himself: he is the barbarian girl).

Indeed, the magistrate's fascination with the barbarian girl's scars and her blindness starts to resemble a type of sadistic identification gained subconsciously through his inspection. The magistrate becomes one of the torturers (Waiting 44) and, once this realisation has been made, he seeks atonement through his own sadomasochistic torture. The extreme physical pain he experiences is something he moves towards, not unlike the moral pain David Lurie drags himself through in Disgrace.

The theme of sadomasochism is no light affair, as Rosemary Jane Jolly points out very clearly in Forms of Violence (119, 120, and 121). She comments – in treating Dusklands - that "both narrator and character are products of the tautological fiction of sadomasochism" (120). In sado-masochism, precisely, pain is the point of transcendence. Pain turning to pleasure is also a form of defamiliarisation, even quite a radical one. Indeed, to be drawn into the Coetzee novel is to gain artistic pleasure through particularly bleak, painful and horrific means at the broadest level. Each novel is built on a denouement whereby the reader is subjected to the violence of the text. In this way Jolly focusses on pain as an agent of literary commentary and, as such, a defamiliarising agent.

The magistrate has visions of hyper-real clarity where time seems to freeze and he is hanging from a tree, at death's door: "the word *flying* whispers itself somewhere at the edge of my consciousness" (Waiting132). Interestingly, the mind tries to move away

from the body at this moment of physical crisis: in Fiona Probyn's words "the magistrate is both objectified […] and also disavows this 'specularisation' (to use Irigaray's term) of himself by objectifying or detaching himself from his own masculine body" (Probyn J.M. 7). In this state, the conscious mind works as a literal refugee fleeing from its anthropometric master. The mind is not the centre of the text; it is a filter, it has to dance to a different tune.[36]

If the suffering body is a constant in the Coetzeean opus, the fleeting and often irregular epiphanies of the mind are often nothing more than chaotic by-products that express themselves in supreme "subjectivity" and "self representation". Pain exacerbates this distortion, throwing the subject into an alarmingly new and unfamiliar world:

> physical pain is exceptional in the whole fabric of psychic, somatic, and perceptual states for being the only one that has no object […]. This objectlessness, the complete absence of referential content, almost prevents it from being rendered in language […]. But it is also its objectlessness that may give rise to imagining by first occasioning the process that eventually brings forth the dense sea of artefacts and symbols that we make and move about in (Scarry 161/162).

Coetzee is not only freeing his narrative centre from any dominant ideology or spiritual escape; he is also (by implication) rejecting the notion that the mind (language) controls

[36] Consider Maurice Merleau-Ponty's statement in Sense and Non-sense (1964): "In the last analysis our bodies bear witness to what we are: body and spirit express each other and cannot be separated" (Merleau-Ponty Sense 173).

the body. It is the other way round: the mind is created by the body, it lives within it. Scarry's comment falls in line with the few critiques that respond to Coetzee's body (in pain in this case) as a response to language and meaning.

However, it is precisely in this zone without referential content that the body in pain speaks with alarming clarity and clinical description. A particularly extraordinary description of pain comes from the magistrate who tells us, with startling and almost unbearable weightlessness and deep sado-masochism: "he [Mandel] deals with my soul: every day he folds the flesh aside and exposes my soul to the light" (Waiting118). We see in this example how pain becomes a bizarre educative process in which the soul manifests itself. Coetzee's reference to a soul locked in the body, hidden under the "folds" of "flesh", gives the soma more authority and value than as a mere material object.[37]

Fiona Probyn (like Attwell) sees the problem of authority in Coetzee's fiction and describes Coetzee as "writing about the authority of the suffering body" (18), reminding us of Elaine Scarry's The Body in Pain. The term "authority", so often associated with the "authorial", the narrative voice and spoken discourse of characters, is used here to describe the presence of the organism. Probyn sees this authority, mainly, as part of an écriture feminine that presupposes emphasis on the physical as a means of expanding conscience. In Probyn's psychoanalytical feminist thesis, the body, with its potent sexual

[37] Chapter nine of this study investigates the distinctly physical Coetzeean soul.

and reproductive capacity, becomes the site of empowerment, but it is still a tool of the psyche; an ancillary to our understanding of events, part of a metaphysical argument.[38]

Conclusions

This chapter's primary concern has been the expressibility of the body in Coetzee's fiction. Key notions of embodiment include the bringing to life of a character through corporeally charged language to powerful imagery whereby faces are blurred in a zero degree physiognomy and the inside is viewed through endoscope. Unlike Deleuze's body without organs, the bodies Coetzee enters are made up of monstrous organs that, in their aggressiveness, create strong enmity with the characters inhabiting them.

The most striking aspect of Coetzee's corporeal lexicon is that it is markedly intense, dramatic and colourful when treating the interior whereas the external and physiognomic are depicted in ellipsis and obliquity. In this mixed perspective the reader is given few clues as to what is behind the faces we meet: as Duncan remarks "there's no art to find the mind's construction in the face" (Macbeth Act 1, Scene 4, Lines 11-12). Coetzee denies the reader even the construction of the face. The inside (of the body), on the other hand, is told far more explicitly.

The movement from the hidden to the unhidden, the outside to the inside, the oblique to the graphic, is in the writing as it is in the organism: the outside is a shell, a voice

[38] It is very difficult to investigate the anatomy intrinsically in psychoanalytical terms because of the innate emphasis on the intellect illuminating as it were its body through a telescopic vision.

imprinted on its featureless face, whilst the inside is a raw, aggressive embodiment that borders on the grotesque. This creates a strong amplitude of defamiliarisation. The reader senses this especially through Coetzee's unique usage of *endoscope.*

The phonological, metric and verbal composition of the internal descriptions is frequently marked, and simile is a quasi-constant method of describing, often used as a bridge between the animal and the human. If the syntax is terse and economical, the imagery is unsettling and even monstrous. This method is key in explicating the relationship between the other and the self. In contrast, the outside of the body is submerged in a hazy wasteland of broken signs, a dystopian featureless heath; it is glossed over and brought to the reader in impressionistic, metonymic parts.

The expression of physical pain has been treated as a mode through which the body, animal or human, is 'empowered' in so far as it creates a highly charged voice that enounces the somatic laws that govern life. If the unifying principle in the imagery of the body is in animal simile, then pain is the amplifier of the body, the scale of being. Unlike Elaine Scarry's (postcolonial) body in pain that stands outside of language in an unsharability, Coetzee's lexicon of pain is lively and vivid.

If Coetzee's earlier work is more imbued with the suffering body than the latter part of the corpus, we could be tempted to see a 'mellowing' of temperament in the writings and jump to conclusions of developmental patterns, but this pattern is disturbed by the content

of the last novel, Slow Man., which deals with pain and the trauma of losing a leg in great detail (5, 11, 26, 27, 32, 38, 58, 59, 61, 62, 99).

Coetzee represents the body – and in this act of telling creates it too – in such a way that it becomes an alarming defamiliarising agent to the fiction in all of the novels. The power and strangeness evoked in the descriptions of his bodies allow a distinctly visceral message to be communicated to the reader.

Chapter Three: The Body and Historical Embeddedness

History and the Body

There is a deep scepticism in Coetzee's understanding of what history means. History is not told as the narrators are "outside" of it whilst their bodies, almost unbeknownst to them, are embedded with history implicitly and organically. Similarly, in In the Heart of the Country, Foe, Life & Times of Michael K and The Master of Petersburg, the central characters are constantly witnessing, or on the edge of the central action.[39] Like the magistrate, they yearn to "live outside the history that Empire imposes on its subjects, even its lost subjects" (Waiting 169). We are reminded of Franz Kafka's The Trial (1925): the deeper mechanics that decide the fate of individuals, be they terrestrial or heavenly, remain unknown to the very person they affect. Susan Barton stands between the fictionalised self (in giving her story to Foe) and the mysterious zone of inconsequential and oddly related body semiotics that Friday, metonym of life or reality, emits. She is standing between two stories: "[w]ho is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong? And you: who are you?" (133)

This feeling of the epicentre and lack of centre is related to the idea that story (narrative) is power, that character and incident can only be related by a second party, and it is this chronicler who is the master. This can be seen primarily through classic examples of paired protagonists (deuteragonists) whereby one writes history while the other acts as

[39] By central action I mean more action of obvious political and historical significance – action of social power and empowerment – as opposed to the idiosyncratic action staged by the immediate needs of the body.

muse. Susan Barton narrates Foe and Friday, the medical officer narrates K, Elizabeth Costello narrates Paul Rayment (although the reading experience of Slow Man takes place outside of this narrative), Elizabeth Curren narrates Vercueil and the magistrate narrates the barbarian girl.

These deuteragonal, dialogic structures function a little like one organism told from different perspectives - the mind (Dawn, Barton, medical officer, the magistrate, Costello) and the body (Jacobus Coetzee, Friday, Michael K ,the barbarian girl and Paul Rayment). When the subject narrated is stripped of speech and clear meaning, as is the case with Friday and Michael K, the act of narration breaks down.

This is dramatised in the second part of Life & Times of Michael K when the pharmacist narrates. The crux comes when the character decides to act, to enter the narrative and become subject rather than observer, to enslave him- or herself to the narrative of another. While nothing eventful happens while K is in the hospital, apart from the intermittent report and K's steady regress, the medical officer goes through an important anagnorisis[40] as he battles to make sense of the man behind the thin body. He is brought to his limits and in a state of frustration he recognises the futility of his position in the larger master narrative of history, an understanding brought about by the speechless supine body of Michael K.

[40] I am referring here to Aristotle's word used in Poetics II to describe the "recognition" or discovery that a character goes through when (s)he learns something important.

Primarily, we have noticed how division and a dramatised rivalry have recurred when investigating the role of the body in the fiction. This motif of dissonance continues when we look to the body and history. In addressing the relationship between the two, Coetzee identifies "only two options: supplementarity or rivalry" (Coetzee The Novel Today 3): either the novel becomes a supplement to an existing voice of authority or it rebels, experimenting towards revirescence.[41]

Coetzee recognises the politico-historical importance of the representation of the body in literature. Pertinently, he describes the writing of torture as an offering of "the Gorgon's head to terrorise the populace and paralyse resistance" (Doubling 366), suggesting that the writer who describes torture is, ironically, playing into the representation of the state's power (assuming, of course, that it is the state that is the torturer, as is the case in Waiting for the Barbarians).

Coetzee takes the subject of torture further by relating its dynamics to the production of the novel. He comments on how torture is "the origin of the novelistic fantasy *per se*; in creating an obscenity, in enveloping it in mystery, the state unwillingly creates the preconditions for the novel to set about its work of representation" (364). It is an idea he develops in his article "Into the Dark Chamber: the Novelist and South Africa" (1986), where he argues that the experience of the novelist standing outside of a story, trying to get in, is similar to the idea of the body being tortured (a metaphor for "extreme [bodily] human experience" ("Into" 2)) while another (the novelist) tries to imagine what happens

[41] What Stephan Helgesson and Mike Marais describe, in analysing Michael K, as a departure from the "imperialistic narrative" (Helgesson 188).

in the torture room. A good example can be seen in Disgrace when Lucy is raped and David Lurie, physically incapacitated, has to imagine what goes on in the room.

It seems clear, when transcribing this statement onto the role of the body in the fiction that Coetzee's novels rebel against the existing "voice of authority". Indeed, he defies this binary opposition by offering a description that explores the torture in a defamiliarising manner, vivid and strange with no overt political symbolism. In Waiting for the Barbarians, the body is described as a "great old moth" (133), bellowing and roaring" (132). A cold, detached tone is used to describe the event (130 – 133), which further creates the strangeness.

> There is something tawdry about following the state in this way. For the writer, the deeper problem is not to allow himself to be impaled on the dilemma proposed by the state, namely, either to ignore its obscenities or else to produce representations of them. The true challenge is how not to play by the rules of the state, how to establish one's own authority, how to imagine torture and death on one's own terms ("Into" 2).

Indeed, this chapter will show how many of the novels use the body to underscore the grandiloquent discourse of the history book by not playing by the "rules of the state". We will see how the "true challenge" of thinking outside of the state is something that the description of the body allows for since it remains a site of continual innovation, mystery and discovery.

But this is not to say that Coetzee's treatment of the body in the novels ignores or disregards history. Rather than an either/or binary (what we could call, in logic, a disjunctive syllogism), we can consider a dialogue between the forces of the body and those of history that underpins the strategic decisions taken in the structuring of the novels.

This structural device, by opposing the established idea of history with the truths of the body, creates "a novel that evolves its own paradigms and myths, in the process (and here is the point at which true rivalry, even enmity, perhaps enters the picture) perhaps going so far as to show up the mythic status of history – in other words, demythologising history" ("The Novel" 3).

This chapter will explore how Coetzee's depiction of the body develops in the light of this rivalry. We will see how the body "demythologises history" first by entering into opposition with the discourse of history, and then, in doing this, by allowing the body (like the fiction Coetzee speaks of in "The Novel Today" (1988)) to "evolve its own paradigms and myths" that, as the final part of this chapter will argue, are embedded in the body.

Furthermore, the chapter aims to show how these aspects of Coetzee's writing the body correspond with the idea of "strangeness" as argued by Shklovsky since in many

instances in the prose, the body's rhythms predominate, and it is no longer merely subjected to events. [42]

Hence the body is defamiliarised as it is no longer seen through the unifying concept of history but alongside it, with equal and sometimes superior exposure, no matter how historically insignificant the bodily phenomena may appear.[43] In turn, through this original perspective, history and the language associated with it become surprisingly symbolic and at the same time palpable, as strange and enduring as the magistrate's torture or Susan Barton's telling Foe about the island.

Enmity

The hostile relationship between the body and history can be investigated further in Waiting for the Barbarians, when brought to the crux of his historical significance – i.e. when the magistrate is interrogated about any information he might have about the barbarians, therefore potentially having the power to alter historical and political events – the magistrate enters into a world of strangeness and corporeality: "I have said the words torture … torturer to myself, but they are strange words, and the more I repeat them the more strange they grow, till they lie like stones on my tongue" (129).

[42] When he has a cold, for example, the magistrate increases the frequency of this corporeal phenomenon in his narrative to the point of telling the naratee that "[his] whole being is preoccupied in sniffing and sneezing, in the misery of being simply a body that feels itself sick and wants to be well" (Waiting 96).
[43] In Waiting for the Barbarians, the exchanges and events relating to the magistrate that can be termed eventful or historical (his incarceration, the records and facts about the barbarians, his torture) are no more the thrust of the novel that the long moments of waiting, travelling, watching and quite simply *being*.

We notice in this example how the body is combined with articulation and the voice to give a defamiliarising image of stones on the tongue. This may remind the reader of the sound of the gravel from the magistrate. In both cases stone is used to relay strangeness. Coetzee is juxtaposing the body with its opposite physical matter in a clear example of defamiliarisation.

Earlier, when imprisoned, the magistrate tells the reader that "the flow of events in the outside world, the moral dimension of my plight […] even the prospect of defending myself in court, have all lost interest under the pressure of appetite and physical functions and the boredom of living one hour after another" (96). We see how the elements of history ("events"; "moral(s)"; "court") are all underscored by the simple "pressure" the body exerts.

The historical and political connotations of the word "torture" lose their significance as the magistrate is left with the strangeness of the word. The stone simile, used to describe the way the words feel in the mouth, is highly corporeal and strange. In this example history (the associative meaning of the word "torture") is taken over by the body (the sensorial quality of the word).

The most essential element of history, writing, is not evoked in this passage of the novel but on page 125 where Joll taunts the magistrate with the threat of obliterating him from the history books: "'[y]ou want to go down in history as a martyr, I suspect. But who is

going to put you in the history books? These border troubles are of no significance. [...] People are not interested in the history of the back of beyond'".

However, the magistrate is so locked in the will and experience of the body that such an abstraction seems quasi-irrelevant. This is not to say that the forces of history do not act on the body, for the magistrate does become the subject of history as he is debased and maimed physically, but rather that from the perspective of the suffering body, the abstract historical significance of events is drowned out by pain.

The magistrate understands his role as a "scapegoat" in an ancient "festival" (131) as he dangles from the rope, but these historical reflections only run for a few paragraphs as long as he is not in pain so great that it takes over his being. The chapter, in many ways the most crucial one in the novel, ends with the magistrate describing himself quite simply as "a body" 131.

This conflicting relationship with history is discussed in a different light when Coetzee turns to other writers as a critic. Coetzee analyses the poem "Letter from Foreign Parts to Butcher", published in 1972 by fellow South African Breyten Breytenbach in his essay on Breytenbach in Giving Offence and concludes with a powerful paragraph on the violent battle language (and its historico-discursive residue) wages on the body:

> [i]n intense moments writing can throw up evidences of bloody or asphyxiating struggles against blockages and resistances: gagged words gagged out. The voice

> struggles to breathe in, to breathe out, against intimate, persecutory figures. [...] It may during this period have been necessary to him, for the sake of his life's enterprise, to denounce publicly his heritage and call himself a bastard, neither European nor African, afflicted with the schizophrenic consciousness of the bastard. [...] The poems that emerge with him from prison into the fresh air point to a much harder task: that of living with his daimon and his demons (Giving 232).

In this instance Coetzee brings the forces of the body and history together in an asphyxiating climax of highly corporeal effect. It could be considered as a prime example of how the relationship between these two forces is a negative one; their common stage is a place fraught with tension. The body struggles to carry the weight of history just as Michael K and Magda struggle with the corporeal mass of their parents (the past).

The division between the body and history is revealed by the young John of Boyhood, who searches subconsciously for a larger-than-life role model, an übermensch in Worcester. He is disappointed in the body behind the name, the visiting cricket star Johnny Warble, modelled on the real English cricketer Johnny Wardle, "a nondescript little man with sparse sandy hair" (51) because he is expecting something greater than reality can produce "according to the cricket books". For John, "[c]ricket must be like Horatius and the Etruscans, or Hector and Achilles. If Hector and Achilles were just two men hacking away at each other with swords, there would be no point to the story. But they are not just two men, they are mighty heroes".

Young John's mind is quick to distinguish between the myth of history, a place where the body becomes "mighty", and the real, where it is often pusillanimous and abject. In discussing his father's personal habits (and, in doing so, deconstructing the name of the father), John "hates […] the loud nose blowing, […] the ring of scum and shaving-hairs in the washbasin. Most of all he hates the way his father smells" (43).

For John, the historical world is superior to the real one because, like the immaculate body of the Greek mythologised history it reflects, it searches for an essence that supersedes existence. The real body, on the one hand, the one that is not in the history books, is not as conveniently heroic or immaculate. By downplaying the discourse of history through this bodily representation and opting for the unglamorous aspects of the body rather than the heroic ones, Coetzee deconstructs the idea of history. "History is a pack of lies" as Voltaire said, a glamorised version of events that hides the imperfect bodies that lie under it.

The visceral communication Coetzee establishes with the reader can, indeed, be read from the stance of Abdul JanMohamed in "The Economy of Manichean Allegory" (1985), where otherness is the process of the colonizer using the native as a "recipient of the negative elements of the self that the European projects onto him" (86). This can be read, for instance, in Dusklands, through Jacobus Coetzee's refusal to see the Hottentots and Bushmen as human beings; in Waiting for the Barbarians, where the magistrate uses the barbarian girl's body as a fetish - part of a pseudo-historical reading of her - and in Disgrace, where David Lurie sees Petrus and, to a certain extent, most women, as

scapegoats for his frustrations and negative passions. Boehmer's paper "Transfiguring: Colonial Body into Postcolonial Narrative" (1993) discusses how

> [i]n colonial representation, exclusion or suppression can often literally be seen as "embodied". From the point of view of the colonizer specifically, fears and curiosities, sublimated fascinations with the strange or the "primitive", are expressed in concrete physical and anatomical images. The seductive and/or repulsive qualities of the wild or Other, and the punishment of the same, are figured on the body, and as body (Boehmer "Transfiguring" 269).

This would indicate a reception of Coetzee's fiction whereby the body is used to stage the other in what JanMohamed calls Manichean allegory. This corresponds with the dialogic structure he uses in his plot and the overall idea of a split subject (the investigating mind and the ineffable, mysterious body). To come back to the way John sees his father in Boyhood, it could be argued that, like Jacobus Coetzee or David Lurie, who embody (and to a large extent, in doing so, objectify) the other, he denies his father a place in history (50 -51) and sees him instead as nothing but a body.

Rosemary Jolly, in her chapter on Waiting for the Barbarians in Forms of Violence, reads JanMohamed's other as an apt description of the magistrate's interaction with the barbarian girl. Corresponding to JanMohamed's words, the magistrate, indeed, represents a type of "narcissistic self-recognition" (Jolly 124) in that the blankness he places over

her allows him to see his own reflection.[44] Of course, the experience proves to be a perilous one, because the reflection he sees of himself is a sado-masochistic one. He is drawn into her experience physically and, like her, is tortured. This point is an important one because it re-iterates the idea of enmity between the mind and the body not necessarily representing exclusiveness but confrontation, which involves (self) engagement, reflection and interaction. Above all, it involves a step into an undeniable physical experience.

The Body evolving its own Myths

It would be disingenuous to pretend that Coetzee is in no way playing along historical sensitivities and fault lines in mischievous, sometimes disturbing ways, for he allows us to empathise with the worst of characters, guilty of parricide, murder, and infanticide, not to mention the politically incorrect and largely sexist discourses of such protagonists as Jacobus Coetzee, Eugene Dawn and David Lurie. Fyodor Mikhailovich explains this double-ness in the reading experience with an organic metaphor to Councillor Maximov in The Master of Petersburg:

> [w]hen you read about Karamzin or Karamazov or whatever his name is, when Karamzin's skull is cracked open like an egg, what is the truth: do you suffer with him, or do you secretly exult behind the arm that swings the axe? You don't

[44] The idea of a Levinasian blankness placed over the body is dealt with in detail by Stephan Helgesson in chapter 13 of Writing in Crisis.

> answer? Let me tell you then: reading is giving yourself up, not holding yourself at a distance and jeering (47).

Beyond the suggestion of sadism (directed at Maximov), we see here how the ethical implications of literature are brought into focus: reading is recreating and reliving; the reader does not have the option to side with either party, aggressor or victim, suffering body or analytic mind, but is thrown into the event.

The true reading experience is a physical one, the reader must plunge into the imagery without fear and (allow him/herself to) identify with every character, as far as is possible, and in doing this accept history from a more universal perspective where the body becomes central, for it speaks without any moral or discursive voice. In the example discussed above, the crack of the skull stands out as the act of the body that carries within its semiotics this crucial dichotomy.

Although the concept of embodiment given by Elizabeth Costello (2003) comes after David Attwell's study (1991), it corresponds with some of the tenets of what Attwell calls "agency". The politics of agency allows Attwell to interpret Coetzee as using writing to open up and rethink the discourses of history and politics. This means that he explores the politics of agency rather than developing any agency himself. This is an existentialist vision of occurrence and one that becomes even more the case when placed in a suffering body. Similar to Dovey, Attwell understands and values the lack of closure in the plot, dialogue and themes. The soma is embedded with historical residue, but this

means little in such an unpredictable environment.[45] Coetzee is "demythologising history" (Coetzee 3), but also (re)actively "rethink[ing], as he puts it, categories of dominance […]" (Attwell 601).[46]

In his analysis of Eugene Dawn's behaviour, Attwell remarks how Dawn is linked to the other through (what I have already called) a "metonymic chain" (J.M. 54) that extends through his body since he feels inhabited by a parasite. His attempt to kill his son, Martin (Dusklands 42), symbolises his desire to destroy this link that stands in the way of the "transcendent self". In other words, Attwell recognises the body as the presence that prevents characters from attaining the fictionalised, mythological self they aspire to. This same pattern can be detected in Boyhood, where in the first chapters of the novel John reinvents childbirth as something clinical and clean, denying the body's actual messiness (10). The father's physical, ergonomic and psychological messiness deconstructs this denial as the novel proceeds and John is made to face his own biological essence as embodied in the father he tries to escape.

Hence the reader is challenged by Coetzee's bodies as they force physiological truths out of a historical context, requiring a broader response to the body than one that stops at a theoretical, ethical level. This means not only that the reader is placed inside the act of history, but within the historical act's making, depriving us of a sense of the completed history and emphasising instead history in the event.[47]

[45] For further discussion of the theme of unpredictability in Coetzee, see Attridge's J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading (8,95,111,112,191).
[46] Attwell's words resonate with Shklovsky's in their insistence on novelty and distortion as artistic devices that open the text to a higher order of reading.

The bodies of Martin in Dusklands, Magda's father in In the Heart of the Country and the magistrate in Waiting for the Barbarians, are all affected by the historical paths their bodies take them on. Eugene Dawn attacks his son because of the neurosis that has infected him physically like Agent Orange. Martin is the victim of a society magnified in an injured body. Magda's father, a symbol of patriarchy, is (ostensibly) slaughtered because of the powerful position he occupies. Tellingly, the bulk and obtrusiveness of the dead body – the corpse – go on to haunt the prose: the father lives on in his slowly putrefying body: the assumption of history is a difficult, physical affair.

If we are to try and grapple with a sense of history, even if the endeavour is somewhat lost before it is attempted (for the past is simply gone), we have to burrow into the body, just as the magistrate and the medical officer try to – in completely different ways – and search for the residue of the past in the flesh. After all, the historian looks for the bones, the primary source, and these most often are people: bodies. "Vercueil is readable at a perfectly literal level, an historical rather than a metaphorical sign of the breakdown of social order during the last phase of apartheid" (Attridge J.M. 102).

[47] The title of the novel Dusklands suggests a melting of day and night, a transition more than a translated event. Waiting for the Barbarians, apart from an inter-textual bridge constructed between it and the Constantine Cafavy poem (1904), by emphasising the gerund "waiting", tends to a notion of the incomplete and becoming rather than any closed, finite circuit. When affirmative phrases are used in the titles, such as In the Heart of the Country, The Master of Petersburg and Life & Times of Michael K, it is with a deep sense of irony, for Fyodor Mikhailovich is anything but a master, Magda is completely lost in the desert and has no sense of a 'heart' or unifying core and Michael K's life is one of a vagabond gardener who trespasses on vacant farms.

The Imprint of History on the Body

History is broken down to pockets of relative insignificance, often highly corporeal and of a certain strangeness that could qualify as defamiliarisation, as reported in the Life & Times of Michael K: "a rioter with a bullet through his lung was discovered huddled in an unlit angle of a passageway in a block further down the road and taken away" (12). The historical cliché of the apartheid years (" a rioter […] was taken away") is disturbed by the perspective of the X-ray: "with a bullet through his lung". The focus on the inner-organ (the lung) is a curious detail that coheres with the overall hidden elements of the passage: hidden ("huddled") from history's gaze in the "unlit angle", the lung is not an organ with overt symbolic signification like a heart, it is an unseen organ that escapes the thrust of historical narratives that normatively speak of "heads" and "souls".

The extract represents the larger idea of anonymous, suffering bodies in the penumbra of history and what it means to tell their stories. And yet, ironically, the most salient historical evidence lies locked deep in the flesh. The symbol of the bullet lodged in the lung exemplifies this. The real history, not the unlived statistical and discursive one Visagie talks of (64 -65), lies embedded in the body.

In Waiting for the Barbarians, Coetzee embodies history in the most marginal of the marginal. The result is an enigmatic, hidden story that cannot be told outside of the body's physical experience. What fascinates the magistrate so much about the barbarian girl's eyes is that she has been blinded. Subconsciously he releases himself to a perverse

obsession with the application of the apparatus of power and, through the body, tries to inscribe himself in history: "It has been growing more and more clear to me that until the marks on the girl's body are deciphered and understood I cannot let go of her" (Waiting 33). "[T]he barbarians in *Waiting for the Barbarians* cannot be identified so clearly; they function as a less specifically historicized representation of otherness" (Attridge J.M. 87).

What the magistrate has to understand is the universality of the barbarian girl's situation, something he does later by attempting to subjugate himself to her past experiences, to go through the same initiations. The torture of the magistrate in which he is put in the clothing of a woman, is a cross-gender, cross-historical signifier of the body's internal truths. The only way for the magistrate to understand the marks on the body is to have his own body marked with the same apparatus. In other words, the search for a person's history leads one towards (and through similar experiences to those of) the body.

The reader notes how Paul Rayment in Slow Man looks for physical traces of the (hi)story behind Marianna's blindness. He covers his eyes when he has his encounter with her (chapter 15). In this state he becomes particularly reliant on the sense of touch of the blind person. It is difficult not to think of Oedipus gouging out his own eyes as a symbol of not wanting to see the truth anymore. Only in this example, it is the truth that Paul Rayment is seeking, and not the powers of the gaze, like Lurie's power of the gaze in the early parts of Disgrace. For Paul Rayment, seeing (historically and socially) is not enough to come to grips with the other and the other's history. Things have to be felt, to be touched.

By depriving himself of sight, Paul Rayment begins to enter into the universe of the other. The act also means becoming highly reliant on touch, which allows him to relate to the body as a body. Coetzee exploits this situation to create an atmosphere of deep curiosity and horror:

> Now that his hands are free, he can touch her as she touched him. But is that what he wants to do? Does he want to be – what is the word? – appalled? The appalling: that which turns one's stomach, unmans one, leaves one pale and shaking. Can one be appalled by what one cannot see but what the fingertips report? … Uncertainly he stretches out a hand" (104)

Paul Rayment's morbid obsession with Marianna's lost eye recalls the magistrate's infatuation, as does the turbulent darkness at which their confused desires are pitched. Rayment is seeking to be horrified, to be appalled by the mutilation behind the glasses, perhaps seeking – in a cathartic manner - to transfer his own sense of abjection onto another body. What his fingers find at first is eerie and, indeed, stomach-turning if not alarmingly grisly: "he meets a hard cluster of something or other, bubbles, baubles, berries" (104). The shock, however, is deferred immediately to the fact that Rayment has stumbled across Marianna's jewellery. Only, the jewellery is described as if it could also be her body: "her throat or her bodice it must be". When he stumbles across her glasses, the sheaths that hide the invisible horror, he is no longer exploring her body but looking for traces of the outside, of history, more precisely Marianna's story (how she lost her eye).

Instead of the author transcribing myths that explain the soma, he describes the soma directly, which means revealing history in the way it is embedded in the body. The search for origins is simultaneously a voyage into the searcher's body. The Jungian archetypal quest for identity sparks itself in the researcher who embodies this voyage: to inspect the other is to inspect a hidden part of the self.[48]

When, as is the case in Waiting for the Barbarians and In the Heart of the Country, place and time are omitted, the reader is forced to contend with history as an embodied narrative. This can be seen as coinciding with the Spenglerian distinction between "the *world as nature* and the *world as history*, which has behind it the classic Heideggeran distinction between being and becoming" (Attwell J.M. 39). Existence precedes essence,[49] which implies that the body's biological presence is of more immediate significance than the historical extrapolations that can be made from it in a given matrix. Consequently, instead of looking for indices to the period and location, the reader is drawn deeper into the elementary workings of the world: the protagonists stand as lone actors on a bare stage, and the spectator's eyes have but this introspective vision to contend with.

To challenge the norm and write history into the body is to describe physical pain, to magnify human smells, to discuss the intestines, the invisible "grotesque" inner organs waiting for freedom of speech in the novel like a silenced proletariat under a regime of taboo. However, to challenge history is still to address it, and the properties of the flesh

[48] This brings back Abdul JanMohamed's description of the narcissism of the self that projects onto the other.
[49] Sartre L'Existentialisme est un Humanisme (1945)

cannot be glossed over as mere attempts at alterity. The majority of critics have developed this theme of political satire, and it must be said that Coetzee's writings are by nature politically significant in voice and setting. Hence the telling of history does not only linger *outside* of the body but, on many occasions, stages itself *through* the body as a "recognised and politicised space or site of oppression and resistance" (Probyn J.M. 19).

In these vessels of oppression, Coetzee outlines trans-historical themes such as pain, hunger, sexuality, disease and death which are intertwined with 'history' and power, but remain separate from it in the way that the body's experiences are different from historical records. His characters exist in spaces within and 'other' to the artificial time of the Empire; challenging linearity and the eventful time of history in his writings, he is moving not only beyond meaning, but outside of it too into the silent language of Friday and K, Magda and the barbarian girl.[50]

While reordering categories and presenting new possibilities to his readers, the body changes its traditional role and becomes far more present. Attwell invites the idea that it might be something beyond the social signifier when he turns to Friday, the mute and (hence) corporeally emphatic character of Foe. On page 112 of J.M Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing in "Friday, History, Closure", Friday is described as

[50] Elizabeth Curren refers to writing as "a certain body of truth [that] will [...] take on flesh" [130]: Coetzee's characters' bodies shrug off the limits of traditional representation and express themselves without the authority of the sign through the cryptic language of the soma.

"the site of shimmering, indeterminate potency". The indeterminate, that which escapes the relentless teleos of historical narrative, is expressed through the body.

"Friday's home is the body: his existence is a facticity that simply asserts its own priorities. The trials of marginal authorship are irrelevant to Friday. This ending amounts to a deferral of authority to the body of history, to the political world in which the voice of the body politic of the future resides" (Attwell J.M. 117).

Friday's body is the enigmatic closure of history in that no meaning can be ascribed to it: the questions of castration and the muteness of Friday, corporeal features, stand as barriers to thought itself and in this way his body is a type of shell (like Magda's hermit crab) into which he may retreat, away from understanding.[51] This idea is dramatised in the efforts the medical officer and Susan Barton (who represent the reader as a type of chorus) furnish in order to makes sense of the bodies of Michael K and Friday. The historically embedded body is enigmatic and strange.

[51] Thus Magda, narrator of In the Heart of the Country, in an effort to see herself as a soul that can migrate from one place (body) to another, describes herself as a hermit crab, 'that grows and migrates from one empty shell to another,' and, towards the end of the novel says; 'The host is dying, the parasite scuttles anxiously about the cooling entrails wondering whose tissues it will live off next' (*Heart of the Country*, pp. 43 and 119)" (Dovey 10). It is all very well to use these words as an argument for a metaphysical will that seeks another body to inhabit, but we forget that Magda is a psychopathic, patricidal sado-masochist who sees words in the sky and runs alone in the desert after alien ships. Indeed, Coetzee may offer us a dichotomy between the soul and the body, but he does not guarantee anything benign or comforting in this.

Conclusions

The mere point that Coetzee's work is so extraordinarily eclectic says something about his approach to history. In a broadly Foucauldian sense, history is recognised as a monologic narrative of power, and Coetzee works his bodies in and around this by suggesting expressions of alternate power through these bodies, but perhaps more poignantly and innovatively, through the unnerving insistence of the bodies to slip off the chains of history and escape reference.

The body continues to act as a defamiliarising agent in these modes because it "makes new" its relationship with history. The chapter has illustrated and discussed how a relationship of rivalry between the body and the discourse of history as a theme in the novels has simultaneously empowered the body's discourse and modified history's.

This chapter has shown how in Coetzee's novels, there are two types of history: the discursive one, based on facts and the corporeal one, based on what the body has embedded. The search for history within the body, however, is difficult because the residue of the past that lies within the body is complex and distorted by the subjective nature of the way it is observed and the corporeal, strange and cryptic manner in which it manifests itself. The two histories are inextricably linked.

Chapter Four: Morphology of Plot and the Body

Bodies against Allegory

Having examined the body in its relation to the theme of history, this chapter aims to focus more on form to show how plot structure is affected by the soma. My argument is that the body does not simply "stand for something else" in the traditional sense of allegory, since it is more often an obstruction to clear didacticism and meaning than an embodiment of it. Instead of trying to mean something else as "allegoria", the body quite simply represents itself.

As in the experience of real life, the laws of the body are the ultimate ones; episodes come and go haphazardly without warning, at constantly varying frequency; they must be mediated if we are to make sense of them; the moulding of the flux into story comes with the act of narrative: Friday and Michael K represent the untold (and, in many ways, untellable) story; this is embodied in the hidden codes (of their bodies) that frustrate the medical officer and Susan Barton in their endeavours to interpret, to chart and record.

In this chapter we will see how a broad circle is discernible from the complex Dusklands, where the relationship between the meta-fictional and fiction is blurred, through more classic, clearly structured pieces of fiction, into Elizabeth Costello, a text that deconstructs the very idea of plot, even more when Elizabeth Costello, who has already

ventured out into the Lives of Animals, comes back in Slow Man .[52] The works revert in their multiple forms to the theme of the suffering body and how this suffering body determines the course of so many of the novels as acting outside of the plot, yet influencing the sequencing of events and creating the atmosphere.[53] The result is a defamiliarised plot: again we will see how the body's truths forge a distinct and in many ways strange trajectory.

EM Forster argues in Aspects of the Novel (1928) that a sense of causality is what defines plot. But can one speak in such a straightforward manner of all of Coetzee's novels? The novels do not, in their development of action, necessarily demonstrate any obvious causality'.[54] If anything, Coetzee's mark of excellence is a departure from the story the reader may be anticipating. Following the formalist approach of Propp, Greimas and Todorov, where teleology is taken for granted, the reader may not be contented by the seemingly tangential escapades, arbitrary episodes and lack of satisfactory endings. Just as his tropes defy normative physiognomic symbolism (as chapter two has explored), so his plot structures follow a path outside of any explicitly meaningful, allegorical dimension.

We should remind ourselves also of the paradoxical nature of allegory: once a sign has a multitude of possible meanings it gains power as a literary trope, but also locks itself more into conventional beaten paths. Attridge expounds the thesis that the allegorising

[52] More complex still, Marijana's husband resonates with the artificial duck maker Coetzee discusses in his Nobel lecture, "He and his Man"
[53] "Perversity as plot principle arranges for things to get harder, to reduce the protagonist's options and confront him with the consolation of nothingness" (Heyns 63).
[54] Here we might think of Life & Times of Michael K or Foe as examples.

tendency in criticism traduces the very nature of the reading experience and is not enough as a means of labelling the novels: "We've noted that allegorical interpretation is frequently spurred by a lack of specificity or some other peculiarity in a work's temporal and geographical locus, rendering the literal interpretation problematic and encouraging the reader to look for other kinds of meaning" (Attridge "Trusting" 40). Indeed, such a poetics does more than underscore the value of history: it exposes the problem of language itself as a mode of expression for the corporeal:

> [t]here are moments […] when the inadequacy of representation being dramatized appears to be not so much the inadequacy of a particular set of available discourses but that of language itself; notably when the body feels or acts in ways that exceed or escape any possible conceptualization – as, for instance, in the magistrate's obscure physical desires in *Waiting for the Barbarians* or K's body's refusal to eat the food of the camps in *Michael K* (Attridge J.M. 88).

Attridge states that the kind of reading he opposes "to the allegorical is literal" (J.M. 39). Attridge argues that Coetzee's writing is similar to Kafka's "parabolic narratives" while Attwell discusses what he calls the "Kafka connection" along similar terms. [55] The questions that these various studies posit (i.e. is Coetzee an allegorist, a literalist or a parable writer?) underline the difficulty his texts present to the reader in their form. Trying to account for this type of writing, Attridge's suggestion that there is a literalness

[55] Indeed, Kafka also leaves the reader with faceless characters (The Trial (1925)) and defamiliarising bodies (Metamorphosis (1912)). When the reader turns to plot and the body, there are similar elements of unfinished, labyrinthine and strange plot progressions (America (1927) The Castle (1926)).

about the way things are described that has long been overlooked is extremely valid– especially when applied to the way Coetzee treats the body.

However, there are significant problems (as there always will be with terminology) with the term "literal", even if at first glance bodies seem to be described with no distortion or surrealistic brush strokes. To call the description of the body literal in the sexual encounters in The Master of Petersburg and Foe is to overlook the way the body becomes part of the will, submerged by metaphysical forces that colour the atmosphere significantly. Techniques of covering and revealing sharpen the focus on the body and sustain its presence in a manner that is certainly not literal, but strange or unfamiliar.

"Literal" does, nonetheless, contribute significantly to an understanding of the way Coetzee uses the body stylistically since the isolated descriptions of the body are overwhelmingly matter-of-fact: not one organ is atrophied, nor is a fluid or surface exaggerated unless it is done so by a disturbed narrator. The use of metaphors and the wider imagery that relates the body, however, is often far less temperate as the next chapters will attempt to illustrate. Coetzee's defamiliarisation of the body is achieved through these techniques.

Coetzee deals with a broad range of topics, interrelated and concentrated in a voice (which belongs to a body), and his work is open to many modes of criticism, especially poststructuralist schools that do not shrug off the complexities of reader response or

intertextuality.[56] The body as centre of text is, in itself, a telling expression of a reality without systematised teleological explanation. By focussing on the act of reading, Attridge invites the reader to look at Coetzee's fiction as literature in the event – something that comes about as a phenomenon in the act (of reading). Jacques Derrida's "différence" between language and speech mirrors Lacan's opposition of the act of utterance and language as a system. Both these thinkers relay a binary pattern that transcends most structuralist and poststructuralist theories of what Ferdinand de Saussure called "langue et parole".[57]

Attridge grapples with the complexity, plurality and intertextuality of the Coetzee novel in a powerful analysis that is focussed coherently and convincingly on passages of Derrida's work for elaboration. He comes to terms with the novels without forsaking the broader experience of reading and accommodates many of the defamiliarising aspects that can be found in Coetzee's work at a broad technical level:

> [t]he movements of deconstruction do not destroy structures from the outside. They are not possible and effective, nor can they take accurate aim, except by inhabiting those structures. Inhabiting them in a certain way, because one always inhabits, and all the more when one does not suspect it. Operating necessarily from the inside, borrowing all the strategic and economic resources of subversion

[56] Although Derek Attridge argues against the term "postmodernist" (J.M. 2-4), he uses Derrida's ideas of "aporia" and "difference" in discussing the act of reading in J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading in a manner that could, arguably, be classed "postmodernist".
[57] What I mean by this is that Derrida's opposition, like Dovey's and, to a certain extent Noam Chomsky's "competence" and "performance" can be viewed as a general split between the corporeal, the immanent (and imminent) and the visceral on the one hand and the theoretical, the ideological and the discursive on the other.

> from the old structure, borrowing them structurally, that is to say without being able to isolate their elements and atoms, the enterprise of deconstruction always in a certain way falls prey to its own work (Derrida Of Grammatology 24).

Hence deconstruction is a type of conscious self-reflexive reinvention. The body becomes a sign with a historical heritage that must be deconstructed. If we keep this in mind while reading a novel such as Life & Times of Michael K, where the second part of the work is controlled by the narrative voice of a medical officer who investigates K's body from an authorised source (the outside) only to find that he cannot penetrate it, this becomes a comment on the novel's inability to enter the body because of positivistic, scientific restrictions on perception. We can assimilate some of Derrida's terms to qualify the overall writing strategy in Coetzee, but the body, because of its uniqueness, lies beyond those ideas of Derrida that have been used by Coetzeean critics.

Although Attridge's study, like Dovey's, relies on these poststructuralist ideas in his thesis, there is an important difference in approach between the two. While Dovey labels Coetzee an allegorist, Attridge expresses the idea that the "urge to allegorise Coetzee" (J.M. 39) in criticism, so devoted to meaning and didacticism, traduces the very nature of a reading grid Coetzee is underwriting and does not account for the fiction's tissue. In this respect see the whole chapter "Against Allegory" in J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading and "Trusting the Other: Ethics and Politics in J.M. Coetzee's Age of Iron" [1994].

It is true that 'the body' as a coherent theme in Coetzee's fiction is less simple to locate than the political environment it is part of: we encounter 'the suffering body' as a metaphor for outside forces and attribute social, historical characteristics to it. Just as we are tempted to say that Kafka's The Metamorphosis (1912) is not just about a man who turns into a beetle, but an extended metaphor for a man alienated by his family, culture and age, so too do we look at Michael K's harelip as a suggestion of the voiceless subaltern in a time of war, or the rape of Magda in the Heart of the Country as signifier of a woman's lebenswelt in an oppressive patriarchal society. This type of reading – what we could call allegorical – as suggested by Teresa Dovey, is a traditional response to the text. A crude example would be the Swedish Academy's press release on Coetzee, which concludes rather reductively that "extensive reading reveals a recurring pattern, the downward spiralling journeys he considers necessary for the salvation of his characters. His protagonists are overwhelmed by the urge to sink but paradoxically derive strength from being stripped of all external dignity" (Swedish Academy 2003).

However, the prose itself carries with it the undoing of this all-too-easy parallelism.[58] The most recent of Coetzee's novels, Slow Man, treats the subject of amputation and what it means to adapt to a mutilated body: the metaphoric potential of such a plot line becomes increasingly difficult to analyse in any overtly teleological sense, despite the sheer physical trauma of such a predicament, when Coetzee reintroduces Elizabeth Costello into the novel and opens inter-textual links with his own writing.

[58] In other words, considering reader response and the inherent allegorising tendency in reading, a body will always be 'filled' with meaning.

Plot and Narrative

As is often the case, a holistic, synthetic analysis of structure cannot do justice to the multiplicity and range in directions Coetzee offers. Each book breathes in its own space; the author's shifts in time, place and character are in themselves testimonies of the multiplicity and polymorphism of the world. In the opus works range from slowly paced, reflective meanders like Life & Times of Michael K to fast-moving denouements such as Disgrace, from oneiric confessions (In the Heart of the Country and Waiting for the Barbarians) to clinical third person accounts of the self. Intertextuality – to be found in The Master of Petersburg, Foe and Slow Man (this last example of an inwardly turned intertextuality) - adds a different complexity to the concept of plot since the story line of these works is given a renewed significance in the light of the story of Dostoevsky's life, the plots of the novels Robinson Crusoe and Moll Flanders and Elizabeth Costello respectively. It goes without saying that all novels are woven into an interconnected tapestry: no single trajectory can be isolated from the context and crossroads that define them. This sense of interconnectivity is so emphatic in Coetzee's works that they resemble open organic systems rather than impermeable building blocks.

This is not to say that the structure of the action in these works is only a question of effect, but that Coetzee is often using the space between omniscient or unreliable narrator and reader, as well as the sense of progression and logical consequence at the level of story, to respond to the elliptical, classic structure where there is a beginning and an end, a protagonist and an antagonist, a quest and journey. Coetzee is continuing with classical

plot structure in a more creative manner, by interposing the turbulences fashioned by a body with its own needs. He does not always highlight the "important" events and keeps them at the same pacing, tone and mood of other apparently parenthetical activities.[59] This position is embodied in the characters of Elizabeth Curren and Paul Rayment as they are restricted and events come to them intermittently.

The reader searches for a centre, but is left with diffraction. When reading Disgrace, for instance, the critical presence of the dogs decentres David Lurie's dilemma by embodying his hopes, humanist sensitivity, but also his aggressive side in animals that one would usually associate with servility and obedience rather than key carriers of meaning. Lurie is attacked, the dogs are slaughtered and he later achieves vicarious revenge through this canine embodiment when Pollux, the rapist, is unexpectedly mauled and bitten: "homo lupus homini". The reader tries to find a comprehensive, unified character but is offered instead a refracted self spread over the relationships with the external world, relationships that become murky and are without language, in this case transgressing the division of species.[60]

This dynamic is at work in many novels: the stance taken in Foe is one that equates the centre itself (or, at least, the muse) with something hidden and elusive: indeed, the core of Susan Barton's quest is to fathom Friday, but her endeavour is constantly rebuffed by

[59] In the Heart of the Country offers a particularly good example: Magda's movements like Michael K's sleeping patterns and the magistrates' massaging of the barbarian girl's feet are what guide the reader more consistently than the events that take place around them.
[60] In Age of Iron, Vercueil's dog becomes an embodiment of the ineffable communion between him (the owner, Vercueil) and Elizabeth Curren, another example of the periphery of the plot (the dog, a pet, is expected to be relatively trivial) gaining significance and decentering the presumed authority of human dialogue and character.

Friday's opacity. Because of this, the plot stops and starts continually, despite events carrying through. Of course, things do happen: they are rescued, Cruso dies, and they arrive in England and meet Foe and so on. However, the centre of focalisation is not so much on the unravelling of these events but the knot of impermeability that sits in Barton's way, not allowing her rational mind to vanquish the other and therefore making the passing events appear futile.

> 'Then there is the matter of Friday's tongue. On the island I accepted that I should never learn how Friday lost his tongue, as I accepted that I should never know how the apes crossed the sea. […] To tell my story and be silent on Friday's tongue is no better than offering a book for sale with pages in it quietly left empty' (Foe 67).

This citation resumes the crucial role of the body in sense of event and plot, and brings us back to the body and historical embeddedness. The story has to be told, and the telling is a physical act. Indeed, the body gains authority by refusing to speak.[61]

The idea of plot being decentred is also seen in Age of Iron in which Elizabeth Curren is drawn to Verceuil and the bodily truths he epitomises. To understand Curren and to situate her in plot and history, the reader must try to understand Verceuil too; to track the

[61] To come back to the argument for defamiliarisation in Coetzee's fiction, it will be noted that the best known book for leaving pages "quietly … empty" is Laurence Sterne's The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman (1759 – 67), the text that Victor Shklovsky uses as prime example for his theory.

movements and choices of the magistrate in Waiting for the Barbarians, we cannot ignore the barbarian girl and Joll.

The plot of Coetzee's second novel, In the Heart of the Country, is difficult to fully comprehend since Magda offers alternative readings of the same events, the episodic time structure becomes circular in part as she goes back over the plot, showing what would have occurred in the gaps and unopened pockets of the first rendering. At the end of the novel, it is impossible to tell whether any of the action mediated in the story is or was real or imaginary, and as this polyvalence is framed as a piece of fiction, the author seems to be implying that retellings of events are invariably subjective, unreliable and underwritten by larger acts of narrative. Rather than giving the reader a line of action motivated by a clear purpose, Magda asks questions:

> "[w]ho is behind my oppression? You and you, I say, crouching at the cinders, stabbing my finger at father and stepmother. But why have I not run away from them? [...] my story is my story, even if it is a dull black blind stupid miserable story, ignorant of its meaning and of all its many possible untapped happy variants" (5).

The story she has lived, personified with adjectives such as "blind", "stupid" and "ignorant", is a thoroughly physical affair, devoid of deep abstraction. Magda responds to what she calls "simple passions" (13) once she has removed the castrative, restricting father. This idea is embodied in the form of her gruesome parricide. The fact that Magda

cannot fit his body into the grave she has dug is gruesomely symbolic of her miscalculation in assessing her condition in relation to the father. Magda thinks that by removing the father she will be liberated and, like Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee, dominate time and space, but she cannot since Hendrik replaces the father and subsequently takes over the household. As such the father's body will not fit in the hole that should make it disappear. The bulk of the body remains an obstacle.

Since, as chapter 3 has shown, a significant number of Coetzee's protagonists live, or attempt to live, outside of history, so too do most of them stand not at the centre of action, but in some reclusive corner of the plot. There are exceptions, in Dusklands, the autobiographical works and Disgrace. However, even in the case of the latter the protagonist, David Lurie, ceases to be an agent once he is expelled from the university. From this point on it is Lucy and the baby, Petrus and Pollux and Bev Shaw who carry the plot through. In the end David Lurie's dethronement is symbolised by his literally being off-stage as he watches Melanie's performance in the theatre (191 – 194) just as he is off-stage when Lucy is raped (97). It is David Lurie's body and his bodily interactions that "disgrace" him and lead him to the back of beyond, from where he becomes literally a minor executioner.[62]

Before becoming too comfortable with any sense of homogeny and pattern, the reader should not lose sight of the fact that, when it comes to story line, we cannot permit ourselves to hoist a barrage of simplistic interpretations based on abstract criteria across

[62] In a related manner, Elizabeth Curren (Age of Iron) and Paul Rayment (Slow Man) are pushed to the fringe by their sick and amputated bodies respectively.

the works, but rather have to develop a holistic reflection that does not neglect the opus's natural sporadic diffusion. Coetzee may write using an implicit formula, but the distortions and complexity of each version are so important that the work changes completely each time.

From the outset, for example, Life & Times of Michael K and Disgrace follow the same generic plot structure: release of function, exile, suffering, return. However, Disgrace, the annals of Eros and Thanathos, is peppered with literary references to Sophocles, Byron, Baudelaire, Langland, Rilke, Goethe, Villon, Virgil and Hardy. Yet it is written in aphoristic, fluid prose that races to a climax: it is a burning away of sensitivity to harden man into the dogman. Michael K recreates the universe from a poetic, neophyte, inductive verse. Michael K is spiritual; he goes through cycles of fasting and abstinence, trying to detach himself from his body. Nevertheless, at the core, both protagonists absorb the situations stoically; both end with resonating emptiness. Indeed, all the novels follow a broad pattern, but the paths taken from the centre to the circumference of the circle are infinite.

The novels always begin and end with paragraphs of stylistic and symbolic power, but very often the subject is merely a fragment from a chain of events; we are starved of any classical sense of apogee. In Coetzee the pattern is to start and end in medias res, to create such unlikely situations that they have an uncanny sense of realness to them. This is compounded in many of the endings that leave the readers stranded where they began: the reader notes that the teaspoon at the end of Life & Times of Michael K resonates with

his being fed with one in the first pages of the novel; In the Heart of the Country ends where it begins: inside the boundaries of the Lacanian Law of the Father (or "(K)not of the father"): Magda has "chosen" to "lie […] near my father's bones" (151) ; in the opening paragraph of Disgrace, David Lurie is presented as a man who, in a clinical matter-of-fact manner, is "to his mind" in control of his body's whims; in the final one he is subjected to hard truths of the body and corporeal shame (from 'solving' a problem to a 'giving up'), and in Foe we end where we start, in the mysterious amniotic depths of the ocean. In each case it is a physical ending, not a metaphysical closure.

The framing of the narrative is, in this sense, circular, for we always come back to the essence driving the plot. Even in the autobiographical Youth and Boyhood, the openings and endings are within the respective pecuniary and topographical thematic frameworks. This turning in does not mean that the characters have not changed, the circularity has moved them in time and space through significant metamorphoses; they have aged and are not what they used to be.

Bodily Plot Development

If we look to the various plot structures in the opus of Coetzee's fiction, we see that the events are systematically caused by physical desire (and this does not automatically mean libidinal desire). If the protagonists think themselves driven by ideals, in actuality they enact responses to somatic drives.

Slow Man is the clearest example of a body driven plot. All the action that ensues from the opening description of the collision is related to the consequences of that meeting: "it can all be traced back to my brush with death on Magill road" (209) says Paul Rayment. "Wayne Blight comes out of nowhere to smash his leg to a pulp, *therefore* months later he collapses in the shower, *therefore* this scene becomes possible" (211). Indeed, if we are to reason in terms of causation, it is clear that Slow Man as a novel is determined very precisely by the inscription of event on the body and as a result what it (the body) can do and what it can no longer do after this event. The novel is a good example of a defamiliarising plot because the traditional teleos of metaphysical transgression and physical nemesis (as in Oedipus) is reversed with all ideas and thoughts springing from an initial, physical accident on the body that forms it.[63]

Paul Rayment's situation is not entirely one that comes out of nowhere for he deliberately refuses a prosthesis and decides to attempt things in what he sees as a more honest way. As he decides against any artificial aid, he throws himself to the mercy of the world in a stoical act of acceptance that keeps the reader aware of the amputation through the continual nursing that is needed because of this resolute decision. Marijana tries to win Paul over to the idea of using a prosthesis, but to no avail: where she can see a clear, non-physical solution to a problem, Paul Rayment wants emotional support, someone to love him and care for him.

[63] The opening of Life & Times of Michael K, like the opening of Slow Man, dramatises this clearly with the birth of the baby with a cleft palate, something that doctors tell Michael K to get fixed, but something he chooses to live with as Paul Rayment refuses aids to his body.

The plot of the novel is turned inwards on itself by the apparition of Elizabeth Costello, who could either be a ghost or a type of guide for the after world, a mysterious incarnation of the novelist who is writing Paul Rayment's story and therefore, somehow, giving him life and substance. These questions are asked but never answered in the novel, and it remains one of the most enigmatic and powerfully subtle pieces of meta-fiction in the Coetzeean opus precisely because of this ambiguity that is sustained so effectively.

Even at the most abstract level (Elizabeth Costello's entrance), the novel remains tightly bound to the body and the truths of the bodies as structuring forces to be reckoned with. Elizabeth Costello's message to Rayment is essentially for him to take ownership of his life and create event, for it is in stories that there is life. This is another example of embodiment, from story to living tissue in the most defamiliarising of techniques.

In Dusklands, at the other end of the Coetzeean opus, at least chronologically, Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee are both ostensibly driven by professional and societal commitments, research on the Vietnam project and the "Journey beyond the Great River". There are connotative resonances of Heart of Darkness in the imagery respectively; but these activities are underscored by deeper motives. Eugene Dawn is trying to purge himself of his body, or purge his body from his mind. He feels possessed and writes the body in a dense, furious style filled with sensorial imagery: "the ropes begin to knot around my body, the primitive, muscular face within my face begins to close off all avenues to the outside world"(8) . Similarly, the way that Jacobus Coetzee dehumanises the Hottentots and goes about dispatching them is composed in a curious

style, the body appearing in vivid substances: “I leave behind me a mountain of skin, bones, inedible gristle, and excrement” (79). Jacobus Coetzee regards these human bodies as animal bodies: nothing but objects of capital value, but he goes on to explain how his crazed attempt to destroy bodies validates his own body’s life. Like Eugene Dawn, he is driven by the desire to master the otherness of death in bizarre symbolism: “all this is my dispersed pyramid to life. It is my life’s work, my incessant proclamation of the otherness of the death and therefore the otherness of life”.

After the bloody revenge Jacobus Coetzee exacts, as a conclusion he re-iterates that the death of the other is the affirmation of his own “reality” (106). He avenges himself by killing as many bodies as possible. This echoes the climax of “The Vietnam Project”, where, before killing his son Martin, Eugene Dawn states: “my time is my own. Yet I am still unliberated” (38). Why exactly he stabs his son remains elusive: the closest we get to a logical explanation is that, like Jacobus Coetzee, Eugene Dawn needs to kill time in another body to take his sense of reality further.

The frustration Eugene Dawn feels is that his life is always more abstract than actual, and this leads to an unbridled desire for event that, if not quenched, culminates in a psychotic spree of destruction. Eugene Dawn tries to kill the most precious thing he has, as Jacobus attempts to destroy as much as possible: both protagonists are terrified of merging with a world they despise, so they differentiate themselves from it in the most radical manner possible, by cutting through the body, sawing the interconnecting fibres, including their own bodies (Dawn does this vicariously through Martin while Jacobus

steadily mutilates his carbuncle). Dusklands is the story of the same type of body cast into different environments. Both characters experience a sense of otherness in their bodies; Eugene Dawn's intellectual project is just as destructive and outwardly directed as Jacobus Coetzee's can be said to be. [64]

In Waiting for the Barbarians, the magistrate is driven by something ineffable, seemingly libidinal, but always obscure enough to keep its identity secret. One may be tempted to see muddled echoes of the rituals of extreme unction and anointment in the foot massages he gives to the barbarian girl, rites of passage before the metaphorical death of his allegiance to the Empire, represented in the narcoleptic attacks that he has after each session, but the overwhelming sense of futility and meaningless is what dominates the plot in parts I and II. After months of nothingness and emptiness at the featureless, desert outpost, the magistrate heeds the call of event in his bones and, like Eugene Dawn, succumbs to the erratic desires of the body to break the treadmill and invoke a more radical reality. Like Eugene Dawn, he puts himself, deliberately, in a dangerous situation in hosting the mysterious barbarian girl and returning her to her people, precipitating the accusation that he is consorting with the enemy. The reader notes that, in terms of actual event, it is the magistrate who has to edge himself into Joll's world for something to happen to him. This is symbolised when he escapes, but almost immediately returns to the prison camp and asks to be readmitted (110). The magistrate willingly provokes Joll

[64] Rosemary Jolly's reading of sadomasochism as driving force of plot in Dusklands in Forms of Violence is powerful and convincing (118 - 122). She explains how sadomasochism in both parts of the novel is what unites the texts as both characters abuse themselves in a dramatisation of the functionality of fiction. Her argument is contained well in a quotation she gives by Debra Castillo to account for the photographs Eugene Dawn collects: "the fictive surface … releases lacerating horror, bruising the reader, who can, finally, feel the point that description alone cannot provide, releasing her into a vigilance through or beyond the text" (qtd. in Jolly 121).

to induce the torture that is eventually administered to him. The magistrate has to force his way into the plot – or force a plot out of the uneventfulness - like Luigi Pirandello's characters in search of an author. To will himself into event, into a story, the magistrate must sacrifice his body, become a subject and even object rather than enunciator; the body must act and be acted upon for it to be part of the plot.

However, the despair and subtle catastrophe of the novel are that Joll and the empire can continue their agenda without the magistrate's presence being problematic and that the magistrate's story will be forgotten. At the level of history and ethics, if, as Aristotle believes, there is a purpose to life and the magistrate understands it through his torture, it remains oblique even in the last parts of the novel. The novel breaks down discourse as the magistrate's raison d'être dissipates in the winter desert. At the bottom of it all, like silt or residue, lies the diffracted, polymorphous body: "[t]hese bodies of hers and mine are diffuse, gaseous, centreless, at one moment spinning about a vortex here, at another curdling, thickening elsewhere; but often also flat and blank. I know what to do with her no more than one cloud in the sky knows what to do with another" (36). Here again we see a defamiliarised plot, strange and unconventional in the motives that drive characters.

The plot of Foe, although on the surface about the act of narrating, is generated by the missing story behind Friday's mutilated tongue and the enigma it represents for Susan Barton. Friday's tongue is the source of her obsession, her muse, since, like Michael K, he is impenetrable, cannot be explicated and is rendered to the reader through the enigmatic language of his silent exterior. The semiotics needed to penetrate Friday's

world is one Susan Barton and the reader do not possess. However, embodiment becomes a central concept in understanding the other: when she sees a dead baby she muses "who was the child but I, in another life?" (105). It is by studying and listening to bodies that Susan Barton pieces together the information that forms her narrative, although she never truly enters into Friday's world, he enters into hers and influences the rhythms of her life, because she desires his body to speak to her. In this context, the mutilated tongue in Friday's empty mouth becomes a symbol of the impossibility of the subject to tell his/her own story.

There also is suggestion in the novel that the act of writing is generational, leading to the birth (creation) of a story. The entire work is covered by this metaphor: Susan Barton impregnates Foe's mind and the story is then born from his mind. This is Coetzee's seminal point about story writing, that it is father-born. [65] The real story cannot be told by the mind that experiences it, but must be fertilised by a stranger. This idea is closely linked to the theories of Lacan and Kristeva on the necessary rupture from the organic "imaginary" semiotics (epitomised by the mother) and the symbolic, abstract world of logos represented by the father: "it is paternity, not maternity, we ought to be talking about" (5) ("Homage" in Threepenny 5).[66]

[65] Although Alexander Selkirk was the original castaway, the story was fertilized by the stranger, Defoe. The father-born narrative is a secondary account, not a direct one (in the way that the child invents the father but is organically linked to the mother). Hence it is Foe who will write the story, even though it is Susan Barton who lived it. She tells him: "I was not to be the mother of my story, but to beget it. It is not I who am the intended, but you" (126).

[66] "[f]or Lacan the question of phallocentrism is inseparable from the structure of the sign. The signifier, the phallus, holds out the promise of full presence and power, which, because it is unobtainable, threatens both sexes with the 'castration complex'. The complex is structured in exactly the same way as language and the unconscious: the individual subject's entry into language produces a 'splitting' as a result of the subject's sense of loss when the signifier fails to deliver their promise of a full presence" (Selden 147).

Susan Barton's motherhood is implied not only through the maternal care she administers to Friday, but also in a strange inheritance linking their two stories. Susan Barton, whose story is a mystery, looks to Friday with an equal sense of mystery. There is a kind of inheritance from her to Friday in their mutually unknown pasts: what happened to her before Bahia is something Susan Barton does not disclose, in the same way that Friday is incapable of explaining what happened to his tongue. It is this darkness and sense of the unknown that gives the text so much of its energy and life. It is tantamount to the mystery of conception: pregnant with meaning. This interpretation is illustrated in the episode when she is visited by her homonymous "daughter". Susan Barton tells her that she is "father-born" and that she "has no mother" (91). Later she refers to her as a "creature" (133) Defoe has created. She has intercourse with Crusoe and Defoe to embody their stories, but also to feel alive, to make hers a "substantial body" (125). Like so many of Coetzee's characters, she is fighting the nebulousness which surrounds and is inside her, she feels like a spirit, an insubstantial body Foe has created.

A comment is being made here on the Enlightenment, the artificiality of the premise of verisimilitude, its limits as a method of describing. The way the body is represented remains a factor of key importance in the telling of the story and hence the progression of plot.

Age of Iron, an epistolary novel, puts face to face a moribund political system and the dying body of the narrator. Like Susan Barton, Elizabeth Curren is on the borderline of events. Her interactions with Mr Thabane and the police reveal, from the edge, the reign

of terror carried out by the government of apartheid between 1986 and 1999, but rarely does she stand at the centre of this political action; she is already on the path from life to death and observes the oppression she sees around her with the dismay of a voice attached to a body that has betrayed her and "a death without illumination" (195). The line that divides Elizabeth Curren from the world of action is presented metaphorically by the wall through which Bheki's friend is shot by the police in the novel, her relationship with Thabane remains, tantalisingly, on the fringe of an entire underground world of political dissidence.

So it is that Elizabeth Curren remains an outsider at all times. The plot of the novel is restricted to the physical movements of Elizabeth Curren, as if to emphasise the reality of events from the perspective of a sick body while the 'real' events are almost always outside. On the rare occasions when she is swept up in action, notably during her visit to Guguletu (88 -108) and her mugging at the hands of street urchins (158 – 160), Curren is placed in situations of immediate violence and antagonism, as if to reinforce the dissonance between outside and inside. As in Waiting for the Barbarians, Life & Times of Michael K and Foe, the 'story' seems elsewhere, and when it does sweep up the characters, the result is not a happy one.

The Master of Petersburg has, as axis, the intrigue surrounding the death of Pavel as its impetus and creator of plot. The concept of embodiment is underlined through the de-ambulation of Fyodor Mikhailovich, who walks in the path of his dead stepson, and in doing so becomes a sort of phantom. The white suit symbolises this vicarious existence,

one in which Fyodor Mikhailovich feels himself carried by strong subconscious desires, so strong that they divide him and cause him to betray himself. He has become a blank page to be filled with Pavel's story and memory. This state of limbo experienced in the suit is disrupted when Nechaev steals it, thereby taking possession of Pavel's reputation. He owns Pavel as much as the father in that he has his own version of events. Since Pavel is Fyodor Mikhailovich's stepson and not his biological progeny, the suit takes on the role of intermediary between the "paternal", symbolic relationship they have and the closer, bodily material (the fibre of the suit holds Pavel's scent).

The lovemaking with Anna Sergeyevna is an attempt to communicate with Pavel's aura through the body of his lover: "As he sinks Pavel rises to meet him" (56). The face he sees in his climax is contorted with pain and breathlessness; Fyodor Mikhailovich feels the small death sink into him after his orgasm, a psychochemical mark of Pavel's presence, an ingestion of his death. The mourning Fyodor Mikhailovich pushes himself into sexual encounters in a mysterious yearning to re-enact the death of Pavel. Even Nechaev, when disguised as a girl, inspires this dark eroticism in him: sexuality, the most intense communication of the body, is a more appropriate pathway for the soma to express itself, beyond language into an "extension of the bounds of the senses" (Coetzee "Homage" 5), in this case into the corporeal, irrational world of Eros and Thanatos.
At the end of the novel he asks himself a question concerning the significance of betrayal: "If he ever wanted to know whether betrayal tasted more like vinegar or like gall, now is the time" (250). It is clear that the opposition is between the symbolic ("vinegar") and the corporeal ("gall"); whether life has any mythological, metaphysical

correspondence (here represented in Christian iconography – the sponge of vinegar given to Christ by the Roman soldier) or value, or whether the sole meaning to suffering is suffering itself, and that the most overwhelming laws are those imposed by the body and its fluids (gall is a fluid that recalls sickness and pain). If there is certainty, it is in the suffering and the cruelty of the body, but does the suffering come from the outside or the inside? The answer comes in two sentences that close the novel: "Now he begins to taste it. It tastes like gall" (250).

The significance of these closing lines, to which so much can be attributed, is that it is the body that charts the realities of what it means to be human more than any exegetic symbol: it is only through the living tissue and the fluid that represents itself that any certainty can be found, no matter how difficult and unpleasant this certainty may be.[67] The betrayal is the one imposed by the self, from within the body.

Fyodor Mikhailovich is carried through events as he floats in an ethereal reality. He does not create circumstance through any determination of the will and allows himself to be transported by the momentum of external events and bodily desires:

> [h]is son is inside him. A dead baby in an iron box in the frozen earth. He does not know how to resurrect the baby or – what comes to the same thing – lacks the will to do so. He is paralysed [...]. Every gesture of his hands is made with the slowness of a frozen man. He has no will; or rather, his will has turned into a solid

[67] A type of corporeal expression of Socrates' "gnotis aeuton" (know thyself).

> block, a stone that exerts all its dumb weight to draw him down into stillness and silence (52).

Fyodor Mikhailovich is propelled by a sense of longing towards his son's death; he internalises it to the point of calling it "his death". Petrifaction can be seen as a metaphor pertaining to other characters in the corpus: they become totally withdrawn from the outside world and cut themselves off; they also harden as the storyline proceeds. The reader may reflect upon David Lurie, Michael K and John (Boyhood and Youth) as examples.

Disgrace is the most explicitly historical and political of Coetzee's novels and the work with by far the fastest pacing of action. Discussion of the plot in Disgrace concerns action and event at an atypically high frequency. Furthermore, there are more references to academic and historical facts and religious symbolism than any of the other novels, excepting the academically-pitched Elizabeth Costello.

Disgrace, in essence, has its story directed by the blind will of the libido. From the very first paragraph the reader comes into contact with a man "who has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well" (1). "Follow your temperament" (2) is a maxim he uses, sexual urges "run(s) through him, a light shudder of voluptuousness" (78). David Lurie is sated since the aesthetic preferences he has are incarnated in the prostitute Soraya. He sees their sexual intercourse as the copulation of snakes, and the snake is used as a totem for Melanie and Soraya (from David Lurie's perspective). This suggests, from an

ecclesiastical symbolism, temptation and evil; but from a more corporeal reading, a certain solemn intent is communicated. Indeed, the sexual urges are so strong that David Lurie becomes irresponsible: he sees Soraya's children, and thereby enters her sanctuary and accepts that she is more than a substantial body, but instead of renouncing her, he insists on tracking her down until she flees him. Then he turns to a second "Soraya" who is "no more than 18" (8) and a student of his, Melanie Isaacs. David Lurie (the onomastics connotes at once "lure" as in trap and "lurid" meaning either shocking, horrible or sickly) transgresses by his promiscuity, bordering on lechery. Details in the description of his lovers succeed in creating an atmosphere of seediness and Nabokovian charm (without the flourish and confession). Like the magistrate, Michael K, Fyodor Mikhailovich and Jacobus Coetzee, he is enslaved to his body.

In terms of plot, "once David Lurie has been expelled from his position, he becomes subject to events over which he has no control, and to which it is difficult to ascribe any kind of rational agency"(Heyns 60). In other words, once David Lurie is away from the convenience of the metropolis, and the security of the university, he has to reinvent himself. Michiel Heyns' article "Call No Man Happy" reads the theme of Oedipus in Disgrace. Sophocles' tragedy, concerning an action of the blind will and its alarming consequences, can be read as a large pattern of exile and return that dramatises itself in the novel. From this extremely broad morphology the bodies of the major characters can be seen to follow the cycle of extradition and discovery. "Perversity as plot principle arranges for things to get harder, to reduce the protagonist's options and confront him with the consolation of nothingness" (Heyns 63). Indeed, during the attack in Disgrace,

the reader notes the passivity of Lurie's role, which is silent and agent-less: "a blow catches him" (93), "he is bathed in a cool blue flame" (96). He approached the "nothingness" Heyns speaks of when he is reduced to "shapeless bellows"

One of the expressions of this perversity is the strange mirror effect Coetzee uses in the development of the plot. The rape in chapter eleven is a mirror of the earlier sexual transgressions by David Lurie but in this instance the rape represents post apartheid retribution and redistribution. There is a striking symmetry in the structure: David Lurie "rapes" three girls: Soraya, her (scantily described) double who is very young, and Melanie with her pronounced "cheekbones" (11). In chapter eleven, there are three rapists, one of them is "taller" with "sculpted cheekbones", a "boy" and a third man who is not described as more than a "second man" (93), and therefore becomes the shadow of the others, like the second "Soraya". The colour bar and gender distribution are perfectly inverted.

Later, at the beginning of chapter 23, David Lurie attacks Pollux, distancing himself from the rapist by calling him a "swine" (206), not realizing that he is nothing but his own twin, his doppelganger on the other side of the racial and socio-political fence, hence his name.[68]

[68] In fact, David Lurie comments sarcastically on Pollux's name, expecting something one might call – from a neo-imperialistic stance –"indigenous" in a denial of any association (200). If the reader is prepared to extrapolate, the twins Castor and Pollux (the Dioscori) are reputed to have been both living and dead, spending each year on mount Olympus and under the earth in equal periods. The Romans swore by their names in battle, and Pollux and Lurie's encounters are belligerent. By setting the bulldog, Katy, on Pollux, David Lurie (who becomes Castor, born of the same egg but believed to be the son of a mortal, king Tynadeos) accepts his own mortality (he cannot attack the boy bare handed) and uses an animal aid. David Lurie and Pollux are the unlikely twins of South Africa: born of a single topos but of different genealogies, embroiled in fratricidal conflict.

The mirror effect has more disturbing mechanics when the reader considers how Lurie himself is reflected in the rapists: David Lurie has "height, [...] good bones, [...] flowing hair (7); the taller of the rapists is "strikingly handsome, [...with...] flaring nostrils" (92). Whilst the boy is wearing a "little yellow sunhat" (92), Bev Shaw "lays the oily yellow dressing over" his scalp (106) after the immolation. Is it by mere chance that the same colour is used in both instances or such similar verbs ("flowing" and "flaring")? The rites of the body are transcendent: David Lurie and the rapist boy are uncomfortably twinned, not in any manner that drives the plot forward significantly, but as a commentary on the inexorable repetition of physical acts that binds characters.

If David Lurie's "sin" is sexual, its nemesis is the same act, but exacted on Lucy. As her name suggests (luce – light), she attempts to bring about light by breaking the gloomy treadmill of violence through bearing a child, but David Lurie is sceptical and sees it as a continuation of the downward spiral, as if an evil history engenders an evil breed of person: "what kind of child can seed like that give birth to, seed driven into the woman not in love but in hatred, mixed chaotically, meant to soil her, to mark her, like a dog's urine?" (199). On either side of the fence, criminal behaviour is denied and ascribed to a greater force. The physical needs are justified by historical discourse and bad faith. David Lurie, like Petrus, refuses to effectively take responsibility for his actions, although he (David Lurie) attempts to attain atonement by asking for forgiveness from the parents of his victim in a strange silent ritualistic fashion (171 -174) and through his care of the dogs in the last chapters.

David Lurie remarks how Soraya is tall and slim and has "dark, liquid eyes" (1) and Melanie has "large dark eyes" (11); he is attracted to a hidden sadness and opaqueness they hold in their gaze. The dogs, so significant in the novel, are extensions of this haunting spirit. They represent a new animal way of life, in which the individual no longer has the freedom to choose but becomes reliant on charity. The gesture of incinerating the dogs to keep their limbs intact is a rough illustration of the last boundary of David Lurie's acceptance for change: his romantic Byronic universe can be obliterated, but even this must be done with some degree of grace. Indeed, he feels a type of atonement in building the furrows and not the main building when working with Petrus; he thrills in his function of psychopomp for dogs. Like the Biblical David of the Old Testament, he cannot build the lord's temple.[69]

In the closing chapters he experiences an epiphany where "as if he has fallen into a waking dream"; he claims to have been "enriched" (192) by all the women he has slept with, possibly with a degree of self delusion. What this shows, again, is that the fundamental traction of the plot is bodily, more precisely sexual. In its crudest sense, we could read Lurie's final realisation as a sign that he has not learned anything from the course of events, as if to say that the plot of the story remains physical and therefore somehow accidental. What transcends history, time and space is Eros and the "'rights of desire ... On the god who makes event the small birds quiver'" (89).

[69] We could extrapolate further in the onomastics by seeing Petrus (Peter, rock that the church is built on) as a representative of the new order.

Conclusion

Since plot is the product of narrative, most novels follow a series of events narrated by a storyteller whose version binds these events together in a storyline or plot. Coetzee's polyphonic narrative structures, multiple structures and decentred lines of action deconstruct this notion to a substantial effect, creating plots that are as strange and self-referential. This chapter has laid bare the essential plot device which is embodiment. This key concept allows for an extra-diegetic communication through a specifically psychochemical, physical ether from character to reader.

> Coetzee's novels […] show that the dual reciprocity of the Master/Slave relationship is founded in an illusion. It is, in effect, subverted by the Other as the word which occupies the position of 'Thirdness' between two subjects. It is, as Lacan points out, the Other as the locus of speech, 'the locus in which is constituted the I who speaks to him who hears' (*Ecrits*, p.141), that holds the ultimate position of mastery (Dovey 28).

Embodiment is a step towards uniting reader with character, for the language of the body unifies the species. As we have seen, it is not only the narrative embodiment that holds authority in the fiction, but the muted animalistic body too. Coetzee is guiding the reader from a safe, mentalist world towards the sensorial universe of Jacques Derrida's aporia.

Using the body as key player in plot signifies substantive changes to a classical 'quest' structure. An emphatic body necessarily sidelines traditional traits of character, largely metaphysical, in a battle of prominence. Throughout the fiction an alienation of the protagonist from historical 'plot' through a Cartesian split between the mind and an independent body in an alternative, subjective reality is at work. This pattern has endless symbolic resonances and is thus exploited in the prose. The subject cannot identify with his/her physiology and consequently experiences pathological trauma (the body perceived as other). In cases where the protagonist's will does not play a factor in this, disruptions caused by the body (or the body of another) force action.

This disturbance or energy sparks a chain of events generated by the needs of the physical. Even if there are moments of "Deus ex Machina", these acts are carried out by perpetrators who are slaves to the libidinal and the sadistic. There does not appear to be any divine will, properly speaking, but interaction in a zone of confluence and contingency where individual wills collide with one another on their various routes "from nowhere to nowhere". In a telling extract from Slow Man, we see Paul Rayment asking subtle questions about his accident, if it was preordained or has any meaning: "could what occurred at the ill-fated crossroads truly be said to have *befallen* Wayne? If there was any befalling done, it was, in his view, Wayne who befell him" (21). This is an important feature to bear in mind: we are conducted only by humans, without the guiding hand of god or providence.

As such, given the infinite possibilities of interaction between different bodies and different wills, not all novels are structured the same way: we have seen how the treatment of the body in Disgrace can reveal a more normative symbolic reading. I have not discussed all the works here, excluding, for example, Elizabeth Costello and the semi-autobiographical works because the pattern of a body-driven storyline is perhaps less trenchant in these cases.

It is only at the broadest level that we can say that each central character goes on a metaphorical pilgrimage in a Socratic, Sophoclean quest for self-knowledge, and each voyage is a peeling off of the ego to reveal a naked, raw id, a downward spiral to the state of a dog-man. Despite the uniformity of this theme, the forms it takes differ so radically that it is not easy to see the motif from the outset; yet even physically passive figures like Elizabeth Costello and Elizabeth Curren experience the laws of the suffering body.

The reader has to reflect upon the reincarnation of the mother's body into the pumpkins, the aborted child Susan Barton sees by the road, Pavel's smell lingering in the white suit, the unseen yet felt presence of Lucy's unborn child, other bodies that are suggested in the wings of the stage, on the outer circle of action, drawing emphasis from the father born narrative to the periphery of the mother born narrative in a unique manner of defamiliarisation.

Chapter Five: Topographical Definitions of the Body: the Body and Space

Coetzee uses a spatial field to enhance the symbolic potential, effectiveness and strangeness of the corporeal. This chapter is centred on the relationship the soma has with its surrounding space; how it is defined and dramatised spatially and the importance this has as a part of the fiction.

Firstly it will investigate how the corpus occupies space: the body as bulk; then explore a large opposition between open and closed space that is built around and through this body. Not only are certain novels structured on the principles of adaptation to space, all of them are structured on a spatial binary principle wherein vast open space, devoid of discrepancies and familiarity, is contrasted with restrictedness and proximity, for there are two distinct spaces -- that of the body and its exterior.

The Spatial Body: Bulk in Space

Since my argument is that Coetzee uses the body as defamiliarising agent, then the treatment of the body as space reveals an underdeveloped and even unrecognised subject. As Charles Wittenberg explains, space remains a relatively unfamiliar topic:

> Marx, Weber and Durkheim all have this in common: they prioritise time and history over space and geography and, where they treat the latter at all, tend to view them unproblematically as the stable context or site for historical action. The

> way in which space relations and geographical configurations are produced in the first place passes, for the most part unremarked, ignored. (Wittenberg 1).

If a chapter on space, a much ignored subject, and the body seems at all unusual, then it will aim to show how this theme is a pertinent one in Coetzee's fiction. In it, the treatment of space addresses questions of geo-historical constructs, symbolically placing the body's spatial truths in conflict with these social patterns and, in doing so, undermining the concept of space as, de facto, a natural stage for meaning. This distortion of spatial organisation has a defamiliarising effect on the fiction.

In a world deprived of external detail, the most rudimentary aspect of the body is the space that it fills, its form: "if I strain my eyes, I can make out a dark shape, a man sitting against the wall or curled up in a sleep"(Waiting 98). In less hazy environments, the size of the body and of body parts is a significant detail since it allows the author to suggest traits of character (and the reception of a character in a narrator's eye): Anna's body is "swollen" and a constant nuisance to Michael K. The duty she imposes on him is literally transcribed in the cumbersome exercise of building a cart from a wheelbarrow and transporting her bulk in it.[70]

Not unlike Toni Morrison's chilling Beloved (1987), characterisation (most often an antagonistic presence) is enhanced and poeticised by the pattern of growing (and encroaching). In In the Heart of the Country, the oppressive father and his bride share a

[70] Similarly, the figuratively "heavy" Sheena, Paul Rayment's first nurse in Slow Man, is described in unequivocally spatial terms: she is "fat, with hard, lardy, confident fatness" (22).

"great double bed" (70) and he seems to grow in death to become an obstacle; it is fitting, therefore, that her father's large body be an obstruction to her, for his body must be buried, but she "strain[s] to take the body off the wheelbarrow" (98) and the hips are too wide for the hole" (99). Coetzee is giving the reader the cumbersome image of a large limp body in a wheelbarrow to imply its weight, mass and bulk. The thread between the examples is an imagery of misfit, as if to say that the real cannot enter the man-made. Magda digging her father's grave and not being able to fit his body into it suggests the awkward transition between life and death; how it is impossible to conceive of the end of a mind and the continuation of a body: the space between the body and the grave is the inconceivability that a person can die, the limit of comprehension (this is why the body simply cannot fit).

Coetzee uses the barrow, transporter of inanimate materials, as a symbol of gardening (burial/interment) that cannot carry more than a child; this ad hoc hearse, too small for the mass of flesh, gives the reader a graphic scale with which to imagine the details of the corpse. What this breakdown of essence means is that the world is seen from a physical perspective. The body's sheer physical mass is as, if not more, important than the life it carries in it. The body has become matter, incorporated into the cycle of nature.

It stands to reason that Nechaev, an antagonist, is "tall" (The Master 199), Visagie, the coloniser from the old regime is "plump" and the terrifying Jacobus Coetzee has a swelling on his body. In each case the spatial potentiality of the body is suggested metaphorically and the constant is a positive correlation between the body's size and the

antagonism (depending on the focaliser and narrative structure) of the character that inhabits it. In Boyhood John, in recollecting being bullied, "remembers the bigger boy in particular, so fat that the fat flowed over his tight clothes" (113).[71]

Increasing the body's bulk is not necessarily a uniquely negative expression of life, depending on the centre of consciousness. In the case of Jacobus Coetzee, he wants to put on weight, to re-occupy the lost space because of his starving, to multiply his mass: he mourns that he is "a thin figment of [his] (my) earlier fat self" (99). He dislikes empty spaces: he feels lost in the plenum and searches identity in his own mass.

Slow Man also concerns the body as bulk. At first, Paul Rayment is in denial about losing his leg. Indeed, a reading of the body as product of the mind can be applied to Slow Man, for in the opening chapters of this novel Paul Rayment goes through some of the symptoms of Merleau Ponty's phantom limb theory: he perceives himself as whole subconsciously - "in these dreams his new and altered body is not spoken of, is not even seen; all is well, all is as it was before" (39) – and refuses to accept a prosthesis as an act of denial that he is, in fact, without a leg (he lies to Marijana's daughter when she asks him). It becomes clear in this novel that the body cannot be written off as object. "Limbs have memories, Madelaine tells the class, and she is right. When he takes a step on the crutches his right side still swings through the arc that the old leg would have swung through; at night his cold foot still seeks its cold, ghostly brother" (60).

[71] The reader may be reminded of Macbeth's not being able to "buckle his distemper'd cause/ Within the belt of rule" (V II 14-15). As Rabelais' Gargantua suggests the degeneracy of the Middle Ages in his size, here it is the alienated experience of apartheid education that is implied in terms of a belt and a fat stomach, leaning on the same principle of a body expanding beyond its man-made dimensions.

By the middle of the work, he is still trying to convince himself that losing a leg (outwardly turned bulk) is inconsequential when compared to the trauma of losing some of the body's inwardly turned bulk. "Losing any part of the body that sticks out is comic" (99), he claims. Towards the end of the novel, however, in a climax of triste enlightenment mixed with black humour, he reconciles himself with the hard fact that the lessened space of the amputated body is a trauma:

> `How is your leg?`
>
> `My leg? My leg is fine`
>
> A stupid question and a stupid answer. How can his leg be fine? There is no leg. The leg in question was long ago hacked off and incinerated. *How is the absence of your leg?*: that is what she ought to be asking. *The absence of my leg is not fine if you want the truth. The absence of my leg has left a hole in my life* (183).

Paul Rayment feels the absence of the leg as a hole in his life, he is repelled by the idea behind the amputation, that of death itself. He is close to dead physically because of the amputation, but also, as Elizabeth Costello remarks, because of his inactivity and continual procrastination. Paul Rayment, like Michael K, is hovering on the border of extinction. Teresa Dovey writes:

> [t]he novels are […] songs predicated on the paradoxical movement which Durand refers to as *aphanisis*, a term appropriated by Lacan to describe the way in which 'the subject manifests himself in his movement of disappearance.'

> Oscillating between appearance and disappearance, enunciation and utterance, between the desire which is named and the desire which escapes all naming, these are the movements in which the subject arises and which ensure the continuation of the discourse (Dovey 16/17).

A response to this horror of aphanasis is the use and expression of the body as substantial: Paul Rayment's massages at the hands of Marijana can be considered the "purple passages" of the novel because of their extraordinary sensuality, images of a thumb running along the line of a scar and fingers running through hair affecting the reader in an undeniably physical sense, embodying character through the reading experience.

Susan Barton sees the "substantial body" (Foe 53) as, first and foremost, a topographical presence: "[l]ie long enough with a statue in your bed, with warm covers over the two of you, and the marble will grow warm. No, it is not because the statue is cold but because it is dead, or rather, because it has never lived and never will" (Foe 79). It is less the sinews and organs of the body that count in this excerpt, than the undeniable presence it has in the field of touch, occupying a point. The entire novel can be seen as the effect of space on an individual; how Friday and Susan Barton cope with their changing environment. One of the ways Susan achieves this is by allowing herself to be used as a 'substantial body' by her lovers (something she sees as an act of charity rather than one of desire). Susan Barton recognises the eternity of narrative, as she situates herself in a story that runs from nowhere to nowhere; if anything, the body counteracts this vacancy with its

undeniable dimensions. The lovemaking with Crusoe and Defoe is a subconscious attempt to mark her own physical presence. The scenes are described in uniquely spatial terms: “Foe’s body [is] pressed against mine in the narrow bed” (144). The reader is left with the physical imprints of a purely physical moment. This is emphasised by her trying, but failing, to find the atmosphere of the island in the arms of Foe. These physical gestures are mnemonic, in her mind, for Crusoe, just as John remembers, “the folding of the woman’s knee” (Elizabeth 24). “[H]e can still almost feel the ghostly thigh against his skin” as he thinks back on her.

This is primarily an existentialist conception of the body: as existence precedes essence, it occupies a physical point first as object before any meaning can be extrapolated from it. Michael K dwells on the question of the body’s irrevocable existence, and the difficulty of eradicating its traces completely:

> [w]hen people died they left bodies behind. Even people who died of starvation left bodies behind. Dead bodies could be as offensive as living bodies, if it was true that a living body could be offensive. If these people really wanted to be rid of us, he thought (curiously he watched the thought begin to unfold itself in his head, like a plant growing), if they really wanted to forget us forever, they would have to give us picks and spades and command us to dig; then, when we had exhausted ourselves digging, and had dug a great hole in the middle of the camp they would have to order us to climb in and lay ourselves down; and we were lying there, all of us, they would have to break down the huts and tents and tear

> down the fence and throw the huts and the fence and the tents as well as every last thing we had owned upon us, and cover us with earth, and flatten the earth. Then, perhaps they might begin to forget about us. But who could dig a hole as big as that? Not thirty men, even with women and children and old people to help, not in our present state, with nothing but picks and spades, here in the stone hard veld (94/95).

This example can be seen as an exposition of the manner in which K sees the world around him. The seemingly naïve imagery of space, in which elements are described physically (K's thought is described as "growing" and the inhabitants of the camp are weighed by the physical mass of their bodies) underpins rich and complex observations. The first is that the transmission and development of ideas is an organic affair (the plant imagery); the second that pure genocide is impossible because of the organic, forensical evidence that a people will always leave behind them (historical embeddedness). Hence K's vision of a world of bulk is not a superficial one, but a poignant lens through which deep truths can be ascertained.

The very principle of bulk is tied, inextricably, to life and death, growth and decomposition. The human body must be defined accordingly if the reader is to get to the core of anything meaningful or alive, as Coetzee keeps saying in the voice of Elizabeth Costello: narrative is embodiment.

Wide-open spaces

Coetzee's innovation goes beyond his using of the body's bulk. He explores not only the inner topos but also articulates the sparseness, loneliness and fathomlessness of the outside's open space. To Georges Bataille, in Death and Sensuality (1962), empty spaces, the outside, signify death, or continuation with the world, while the closed inside, where all can touch and be touched, is life. In this work Bataille shows how life is discontinuous and death continuous inasmuch as the former can be defined in terms of its entropy whereas death and the rest of the cosmos seem infinite.

Coetzee creates a spatial representation of the same idea: all that is small, or malleable, is symbolic of life and discontinuity; the space exterior to this is infinite and continuous (a form of death). Because of this, a number of characters react to empty space with trepidation. It is interesting to see how the magnitude of this fear varies from novels situated in open spaces and those conceived in interiors and tight spaces, how the personage suffers this fear in explicit or implicit language and behaviour. Space is experienced differently by the very narrators who belittle its importance, creating a valuable dramatic irony for the reader, who cannot overlook the influence of the desert on Jacobus Coetzee and the magistrate, or the island on Cruso.

The body is truth not only because it can produce pain, but because of its physical parameters. Outside of its casing lies the echoing emptiness that daunts characters, causes them to fight against it or accept it. Jacobus Coetzee penetrates space and changes it, but

like Magda in In the Heart of the Country (inherently phobic to sexual intercourse) he struggles to obtain a rewarding relationship between it and himself.

These are not the only novels that deal with this idea; indeed it would be more appropriate to see this example as one strand of a larger archetype that is concomitant in all of the works, for all characters are lost in a space between acceptance of the physical and aspiration of the mental. The void is ubiquitous and chaotic, and one can wither away into its endless, meaningless particles; thus the bulk of the body takes on the important role of a cornerstone of literary expression.

When characters begin to contemplate the wider spaces of the universe they see themselves obliterated in the vastness of the scale. In their isolation they lose perspective and sense. As part of his solipsistic dream in Dusklands Jacobus Coetzee imagines himself in the larger scope of things: "The fourth one was the most interesting [game], the Zenonian case in which only an infinitely diminishing fraction of my self survived, the fictive echo of a tiny "I" whispered across the void of eternity"(98).

In feeling lost in infinite space, characters are unable to distinguish the different aspects of space. They no longer see spaces, but one endless space.[72] Susan Barton says: "you will believe me when I say the life we lead grows less and less distant from the life we

[72] The magistrate comments that "[t]he space about us here is merely space, no meaner or grander than the space above the shacks and tenements and temples and offices of the capital. Space is space, life is life, everywhere the same" (Waiting 17).

led on Crusoe's island. Sometimes I wake up not knowing where I am. The world is full of islands, said Cruso once. His words ring truer every day" (Foe 71).

In In the Heart of the Country open space functions quite differently to Dusklands and Foe and it is another rare exemplum of a character-study of madness perceived through exploration of the finite and infinity. Magda's colossal lines are maps of her vacant world, "the black, the empty, the infinite [of]...the orbits of the dead planets" (77). Unlike most of the sane characters in the opus that search for a burrow, Magda's strength (but also her hamartia) is her willingness and courage to venture into the fathomless oceans of emptiness. However, the experience terrifies her, for what she is trying to achieve, from the perspective of Bataille, is death.

Magda's liebestod draws her to the spatial and temporal continuity of death, approaches the whirlpool, but becomes delirious with fear. As a result of this, she is consequently besotted by size; hoping (subconsciously) to find a niche in which to hide. She comments that "in my life I have never seen anything larger than a pig die" (73). She notes that Hendrik's sex is "smaller than I thought it would be ... almost lost ... a midget, a dwarf, an idiot son who ... is one night set free" (75). There is an element of autosuggestion: Magda herself is like an idiot child. She is subconsciously attracted to its small size; she herself, like Michael K, wishes to leave no trace behind and associates herself with all that is small and, ultimately, with substancelessness: "I am simply a ghost or a vapour floating at the intersection of a certain latitude and a certain longitude, suspended here"(19).

In Boyhood the young John observes how in the Karoo "whatever dies here dies firmly and finally: its flesh is picked off by the ants, its bones are bleached by the sun, and that is that" (97). He notes that "from the earth comes a deep silence, so deep that it could almost be a hum. When he dies he wants to be buried on the farm. If they will not permit that, then he wants to be cremated and have his ashes scattered here." Unlike the pessimistic mature John of Youth (and the fully-matured authorial voice of Coetzee himself), the naive lyricism of this spatial mysticism enraptures the reader but is received with reservations because of the unreliability of the centre of consciousness. If we are given characters that bloat space and invade it, what is being sought, in contrast, is a type of Nirvana and total absorption in space.

Susan Barton also shows signs of fearing the ubiquitous emptiness she senses in Friday "somewhere in the deepest recesses of those black pupils..." (Foe146). She is afraid of the unknown encompassed in the sea: "worse by far than the pain of rowing was the prospect of being adrift in the vast emptiness of the sea, when, as I have heard, the monsters of the deep ascend in quest of prey" (11).

Jacobus Coetzee explores space and the space of the body in a disturbingly lucid manner. He presents us with a description of the body in gruesome, quantitative terms: "Hunters had come back from the great river with sledsful of the part-cured flesh of a cow that had fallen into one of their pits. They had brought too, roped feet upward in a sled, two hundred pounds of delicate living flesh" (84). The novel can be read as being about a metaphor for appropriating and dominating space: Jacobus Coetzee recognises no soul in

the people and animals he slaughters, he steels himself to seeing the Hottentots as physical and mathematical objects in what he sees as a duty to remove them from space.

Rather than accept the Hottentots' sentience and complexity he objectifies them and 'Platonicises' them, this way disempowering them by rationalising the space they occupy. Jacobus Coetzee associates death with numbers, in other words continuity and infinity are in the realm of the unattainable 'wilderness' whereas killing renders the innumerable countable and tangible. In a remarkable epiphany he explains it in detail:

> [w]e cannot count the wild. The wild is one because it is boundless. We can count fig trees; we can count sheep because the orchard and the farm are bounded [...]. Every wild creature I kill crosses the boundary between wilderness and number. I have presided over the becoming number of ten thousand creatures, omitting the innumerable insects that have expired beneath my feet. I am a hunter, a domesticator of the wilderness, a hero of enumeration. He who does not understand number does not understand death (80).

Jacobus Coetzee entertains fantasies of mathematical construction to assuage his fear of obliteration. When numbers are cut off between one another, they are 'discontinuous', each number has to 'die' as it were to cede to the next number, and for there to be meaning there must be this incision. We must move past the asymptotic, the axiom enabling the infinite mathematical world to meet the real, entropic one. It is a simple "knocking together [of] a bridge" (Elizabeth Costello 1). It is only if one applies the

mathematical theories of infinity, an abstract, dry form, that such a vision is palatable, at least for Jacobus Coetzee.

It is of interest to note how Jacobus Coetzee associates mathematical infinity with the agonising of a beetle, convinced that the creature can always be rendered smaller (through mutilation) and yet never disappear. This type of reflection is not to be expected from a man-hunter in Namaqualand, and the freakish philosopher/serial killer he incarnates is sustained, at times improbably, as a response to that gulf between being and thinking. The problem with this pure, progressive theoretical notion, again, is that it does not correspond with the abrupt ending of life in a body, and therefore creates a gulf between the mind and the physical, spatial reality of things that enhances and is, perhaps, at the heart of Jacobus Coetzee' psychosis. He refuses to see life in that space created, but accords it merely numerable bulk.

In Jacobus Coetzee' case, therefore, number comes to epitomise this desire for separation: he is at pains to prove this in what becomes the catalyst for action: the protagonist attempts to enclose the universe in his web of destruction. He sees the wilderness as innumerable, and the sole method at his disposal that can carve out a discernible path is the rifle, so he shoots his way through the flesh as an explorer could be imagined hacking back the jungle with a hatchet.

However, Jacobus Coetzee is cut off from his own body because of this mania: he deplores the fact that "the [...] body has no inner space" (96) and that he can be poisoned

from the outside; he wishes to be impermeable like a number that is protected from the continuous outside by rounding off. But such an endeavour is joyless for Jacobus senses that true liberation lies in the acceptance of the outside: “for a minute I indulged myself in a blurring of boundaries. My toes were enjoying themselves in the sand. I walked a few steps, but stones were still stones” (98).

Characters lost in space and unable to define features from the nebulous universe in which they live are represented through a number of metaphors, like the strange, featureless snowman the magistrate sees in his dreams in Waiting for the Barbarians. The snow is obviously dependent on the environment; with time and seasonal change it will diffuse into the outside, ‘die’. Permeability is a strong motif. On the island in Foe, “there was [...] a tiny insect that hid between your toes and ate its way into the flesh. Even Friday’s hard skin was not proof against it” (7). The outside invades or filters into the body, inevitably and as surely as it dies. Like Edgar Allen Poe’s Gold bug, the insect on Cruso’s island signifies madness and, ultimately, annihilation, for the contemplation of the outside diffusing with the inside is inconceivable and can only take place when the body decomposes.

To bring the various points about wide open spaces together: this section of the study has shown how, in the first place, space is presented as an ongoing medium without distinction or variation. Fauna and flora may change, but the sky is seemingly constant, as is the ocean. Once the body has been introduced to this climate, it creates a contrast with this continuity in its own limitations and spatial density. This contrast is dealt with

in various ways: some characters seek to underline it by focussing on its negative facets (this can develop into agoraphobia) whilst others wish to be obliterated by it, to fuse with the outside. At a more profound level, this suggests acceptance of death as opposed to fear of it.

The Poetics of Confinement

Coetzee tends not to give comprehensive or detailed descriptions of landscapes. In these novels, characters are afraid of the void, wary of space. This vision leads the reader into small comfort zones or cocoons where the characters express themselves corporeally: by sleeping, in sex and work. This is an attempt to burrow a hole in the wasteland.

Idiosyncratically, confined spaces, normally associated with negative processes of entrapment, introversion and hiding are sought after; the outside appears as cold and uncaring. David Lurie, Magda, the magistrate, Susan Barton, John and Paul Rayment all search for a niche, a corner, a place to hide (we think back on the example of the hermit crab used in an analogy by Magda). Fyodor Mikhailovich seeks the closest space possible in the suit of Pavel: he chooses to linger in the intimate memory of smell and touch, while Paul Rayment does not move from his flat.

If anything, this is the poetics of confinement and alienation more than the elegy of infinity. The flesh and its microclimate are mortal, so their coming into contact with one another elicits a symbolism of death, for Michael K's burrow will be washed away,

Magda's words lost to the turbulent sky. In an image, the small spaces disintegrate into the larger ambient one, like smoke dissipating.

What Coetzee seems to be saying, in layman's terms, is that we are born from a secure, familiar world but we enter a daunting and seemingly endless one. In the novels there is a search for boxes of various kinds, such as, lost in a desert, the nameless one the magistrate sees engulfed in a sand storm in Waiting for the Barbarians. The box, a symbol of civilisation, symbolises what the individual must, eventually, be reduced to. As David Lurie, the self proclaimed Harijan, packs the dogs in the rectangular crate, he echoes the holocaust, and with it a gruesome connotation of industrialised death. Coetzee even uses the keyword "Lösung" (Disgrace 218) but the symbolism is manifold. Life & Times of Michael K is an example: the box of Anna's ashes, the box (tin) with the money Visagie gives to Michael K, the rectangular burrow he digs himself, all of these symbolise human desires for security.

His mother when transformed into an urn has become light and transportable, the persistent physical and anatomical problems that plagued Michael K when he tried to take her from Cape Town have disappeared, as if to say that the narrative, symbolised by the voyage, can only take place once the mother has been sacrificed to it, just as on an epic scale Agamemnon has to sacrifice his offspring for the winds to blow from the coast to let his ships sail in the famous Greek legend. In Youth John finds himself trapped in boxes in London as he has turned his back on the open spaces of the South African veld; he is not fond of this new cramped space. The novel culminates with a detailed inventory

of the squalid living conditions in which Ganipathy, his neighbour, is forced to live: adaptation to space is not a choice but a necessity, an organic development that occurs of its own accord.

This collapse of space from outside to inside is analogous to the writing of a novel, a problem Susan Barton elucidates: "How can you ever close Bahia between the covers of a book?" (Coetzee 122). The difficulty of fitting the outdoors into an interior is represented by the rotting banana peels in Ganipathy's flat in London. The suggestion is that the marriage between the dense polis of Europe and the epic scale of the 'territories' is an unhappy one, more precisely that the colonised corrupts in the coloniser's space.

Yet the will to shrink space and appropriate it is strong in many of Coetzee's characters, at multiple levels. In Waiting for the Barbarians the magistrate is fascinated by miniature representations of the outside: "[a]mong the items found in your apartment was this wooden chest. I would like you to consider it. Its contents are unusual. It contains approximately three hundred slips of white poplar-wood, each about eight inches by two inches" (120). The magistrate documents and archives what he can about the barbarians in his archetypal quest for knowledge, but it is in the open desert when he encounters them that an indescribable understanding dawns in him, something that remains ineffable throughout the course of the novel. He cannot find the complete meaning of the barbarians in the chest of slips.

Boxes and corners represent comfort for they offer surfaces and limits. Friday turns away from the open outside and attempts to conceal himself in as small a space as is possible: "in the hallway I encounter Friday standing listlessly in a corner (he stands always in corners, never in the open: he mistrusts space)" (Foe 77). It will be noted that Friday only starts behaving this way once he is brought to England. On the island he swims out to sea, a prospect that daunts Susan Barton, and he sleeps casually on the ground. Friday is a rare character who seems to desire spatial freedom and possess no desire to box it in, without fear of the open, the sea and the hills, freed from language and Western neuroses.

However, he is changed when he is thrown into the metropolis and takes on the agoraphobic tendencies of the urban creature. For him, it is England that represents the deathly infinite and ever-transient outside, so he seeks a burrow and withdraws totally. The mechanics of his case are the inverse of those in the magistrate's or Jacobus Coetzee's, but the allegorical signification is one and the same: (wo)man searches inherently for a space where his or her body does not feel colonised. The surreal Sufi dance witnessed by Susan Barton represents his biological yearning to break free: he is literally a dervish in this passage, spiralling out of his bounds: "in the grip of dancing he is not himself. He is beyond human reach" (Foe 93). Michael K also searches to break out of boxes (he succeeds in doing this, if one takes the clinic for one of these boxes), but he is more social than Friday, and as the study has shown earlier, he seeks and builds boxes as well as rejecting them.

Searching for a type of womb in a closed warm space is a biological factor that is not unusual: after the magistrate has been tortured he does this: “beneath the wooden stairway that leads up to the balcony and servants’ quarters is a recess where wood is stored and where cats retire when it rains. I crawl in and curl up on an old bag” (Waiting 101). Coetzee is simply following the laws of the body to give it its shape: under the effects of torture its dictates are heard more clearly.

Life & Times of Michael K is an extremely spatial novel in that it treats Michael K’s predicament in simultaneously literal and metaphorical terms as a desire for space after the confines of the city. The pilgrimage he goes on functions as a symbol for re-appropriation of land by the oppressed classes in South Africa. However, the land is still in the hands of the colonisers, and Michael K, reminding the reader, at times, of Ngugi’s Matigari (1989), is forced to come to terms with a history that is outside of his grip. This desire, created at a conscious level, comes from a resentment of the living conditions created by poverty: “Michael K did not like the physical intimacy that the long evenings in the tiny room forced upon the two of them” (7). The room he has to share with his mother has “no ventilation” and the air is “always musty” (6). Anna, like her son, lives in a confined world. The reader senses in this last example how Coetzee is utilising space to illustrate the relationship between narrative and history: the reduced space signifies the reductionism necessary to the act of telling a story as well as the small “space” suffered at the borders of the space of the Empire.

The opening paragraphs are focalised on Anna, and she broods on his "tiny bud of a mouth" that "would not close" (she does not like this), feeds "it with a teaspoon", hoping it "close[s] up as he grows older" (3). The dominant mood is one of dislike: she cannot accept Michael K's natural osmosis with the world, emblematised by the hare lip that connects him with the outside. [73]This is ironic given her desire to "die under blue skies" (8) and the function Michael K takes on as transporter from the polis to the outside (although she dies before this can be completed). Anna, like her son, has been confined to an uncomfortable space (one thinks on the township policy of the apartheid government) when she longs for open space. This political deprivation is re-enacted in the diseased body by which she is hampered and yet formed.

Michael K is claustrophobic in that his conscience, manifesting itself at the penumbra of dream, pushes him away from closed spaces. [74] This imagery is connected to Michael K's hermeneutic universe; he wants to join the earth, the heat and the hills (this is the expanse of the mind), but he cannot survive like this so he invariably brings himself back into the 'boxes' of the polis. [75] Michael K's dreams are of openness and running at speed, mere transcripts of the huge distances he covers in his peregrinations. The dream of the farm is a spatial one: Michael K and Anna imagine a boundless place (which counters the

[73] I say this because the harelip means that Michael K cannot close his mouth entirely and will therefore always be exposed to the outside.
[74] He makes what seems an inherent link between Huis Norenius (the 'home' where he was brought up) and Visagie's empty house: "When he stretched out his hand he touched the head of the iron bedstead [...] from the coir mattress came the smell of old urine"(56).
[75] Michael K is consciously interacting with nature; he sees his body as a natural organism; does not question the effect of the environment on him and lives through it entirely. Jacobus Coetzee is at the other extreme of this body/mind relationship inasmuch as he imagines that he fears union with the outside and consequently develops a "Laager mentality", trying to cut the outside off or away from his own body space. The reader notes how the spatial structures of these respective novels are the same: wastelands, the bleakness of such a background offering more emphasis on the spaces that fill it and the battles wrought to gain it.

confinement in which they dwell), marked obliquely by bare signifiers, the lowest common denominator: When Michael K arrives at Port Alfred all he has as a landmark is a "chicken-run" (Life 8) and "an old wagon house" (51). "It is only small and thinly peopled places that can be subjugated and held down in words" (Foe 122/3).

However, the dream of proliferating into space and leaving a legacy is destroyed clinically by the forces of order when they blow up his pumpkins, symbols of his dissemination. He is forced back into his body as the universe has turned against his efforts to build: his claustrophobia is inverted and Michael K begins to fall prey to a paranoia that sees him bury himself in a tiny space he tries to conceal from the view of the outside world.[76]

Part 1 deals with Michael K developing a desire to break out of the tight space confining him and fly outwards. The focus on his mother's large body and how difficult it is to fit in the wheelbarrow and transport is an echo of the motif of the body as bulk. The turning point in this comes with her cremation, the space she occupies is folded and all that remains can be fitted into a box. Michael K wishes to blow these ashes over the plenum so that they may transform into a world of pumpkins, he resuscitates her by allowing her to continue to grow (like his thoughts) in the shape of a plant.

Michael K does not yet understand that space is beyond his control. From his world of gardens (miniaturised simulacrums of natural space) and 'homes', spurred on by his

[76] Paul Rayment expresses a similar point in explaining how suicides always leave behind a body, almost wishing that one could disappear from the earth physically without someone else having to help the process along (Slow Man 13).

mother's nostalgia, he has come to romanticise the outdoors. Interestingly, Michael K is driven by a deeper desire still: not only does the body want to be cured, but subconsciously he wants to return into the box, because he senses somehow that the box is connected with freedom. In fact it is death and infinite space he dreams of, but his body has not come to accept this. This desire is best illustrated on the farm when Michael K builds a type of grave for himself: "[h]is first step was to hollow out the sides of the crevice till it was wider at the bottom than the top [...] the narrower end he blocked with a heap of stones [...]. When dusk fell he realized with surprise that he had spent a second day without eating [...]. All day long he did not eat or feel any need to eat" (100). As he constructs the cellar he forgets food and begins to shrink till he looks like an old man in the second part. The body, by this stage of developments, has begun to follow Michael K's subconscious desires. It takes him to the brink of his conscious state but on two occasions drives him out of the burrow into the open, this time not as a metaphorical death wish, but on the contrary, to be saved.

In part 2 of the novel Michael K is reduced to the space of a bed; he is incarcerated by his body that wants to survive while his mind effectively wants to die. As a consequence, he is silent to the reader and becomes present uniquely as a body whilst the narrative voice, the medical officer's, 'takes over' the mind's 'space'. It would be premature to discuss the liebestod in detail here, which is reserved for the last chapter of this study, but interesting to come back to the significant idea that death is infinity, or "continuity", and life "discontinuity": in this paradigm Michael K is thrown between the two, although his body's desire to perpetuate itself seems stronger than all other wills.

The spatial representation is thus a key to an alternative way of understanding the novel: Michael K is attracted to open space since he has always lived in his body, in time and restricted space, symbolised by the small room he shares with his mother in Cape Town in the beginning of the story. However, this room has "DANGER-GEVAAR-INGOZI" (6) on its door, and represents the painful Gahanna of life in the flesh he will have to live out. Michael K attempts to live outside of his body, but this proves to be impossible.

At the end of the novel, Michael K's movements have slowed down, and consequently the space around him has been greatly reduced. He is regressing to the smaller circuits that foreshadow his death as opposed to the large distances covered earlier on in life. It is fitting that he should return to the beach for it is by the sea, the very limitlessness he is seeking, and not the grave that came to be a type of chrysalis in the soil. Interestingly, the burrow is washed away by rain water, itself a metaphor for the inevitable passage towards continuity, or, from another perspective, his fear of the small space he creates for himself. Michael K's anagnorisis, after his painful route, is that he is a substantial body that must accept the invasion of the outside. The battle to create a niche has been forgotten, Michael K's agoraphobia has subsided and he allows himself to be "contaminated" by the alcohol and sex of society in the last pages.

What we see in the relationship this character has with space is a metaphorical representation of the necessary steps of growing and aging, as delineated by the body: Michael K expands into space, crosses a threshold, lives out his life in that space before retracting into the shell of his body. All the while he comes to terms with his fear of

exposure and the outside as his mind prepares him for death. Retracting space, the loss of space, is nothing but a preparation for death: “losing a leg is no more than a rehearsal for losing everything” (Slow Man 15).

In other works in the opus, the reader can outline an antipathy towards closed spaces: “two strangers have penned themselves up together in ... a cramped and comfortless living-space” (Youth 8). However, these examples are greatly outweighed by the stronger theme of phobia of open spaces. More often than not, characters are very different to Michael K and wish to bury themselves in familiar, approximated symbols and hide from the emptiness, like Anna who keeps her savings “in a handbag in a suitcase under her bed”(7).

The chapter has endeavoured to show, thus far, how Coetzee defines spatial differences to outline a universe in which the question of scale is fundamental. The desire of Jacobus Coetzee, Susan Barton and John to explore space is, in most novels, countered by those who seek a metaphorical womb.

Conclusion

What is significant about the large spatial paradigm that Coetzee is using is that it enacts the crises of life meeting death, an archetypal fusion. Small spaces (rooms, suits, boxes, burrows, holes, islands and shelter) are ephemeral and can withstand the outside only as

long as their fragile permeability allows: the discontinuous must give way to the continuous inanimate eventually.

The body is the seminal representation of microspace. It searches for the small, but the mind, mathematically infinite, ebbs around it, causing a kind of friction with the contact between the two that translates into the senses. The idea of death as open space is shown clearly in the incineration of the dogs on the farm in Disgrace, Michael K's dissemination of his mother's ashes, Magda's burial of her father in the desert and Jacobus Coetzee's killing spree in Namaqualand. In the case of Disgrace, this causes a type of morbid eroticism; for Jacobus Coetzee, it is the muse of Zeno that overpowers his essence to the point of him annihilating bodies as experiments in life meeting death. It is this primordial fascination that unites characters in the opus. Whether they appropriate space and miniaturise it, like Cruso, or open themselves to it, like Friday, they all live out their lives in an existentialist awareness of death: defined in their own manner, but connected with the outside like shadows.

The rapport between specifically rectangular miniature space and the outside is a recurrent feature of the writings. The box is a symbol for the artificial entrapment of space/time dimensions. The grave Michael K builds for himself is shaped thus as a crude signifier of the individual making space for himself, away from the wilderness, trying to recreate a world. This endeavour is futile, and the outside seeps in; no man is an island. The ingenuity of presenting this notion in a novel is that it transcends the narrative and

comes to present itself in the very book or page you are holding: the fathomless exterior has been trapped in ink and in the shape of letters that connect the reader with the text.

Coetzee uses the body in its sheer size and mass as a reminder of its inalienable presence. Classical allegory is allowed with some characters, but in others there is an inverse correlative (consider Bev Shaw in Disgrace, who is squat but, paradoxically, embodies the strongest, 'grandest' spirit). Bulk is also used to implicate the body's abjectness, this being part of its poetic function.

Movement through space is important; space allows the author the opportunity to deconstruct the hierarchy and mystification that it has in society and to show that the inanimate world is continuous and, at a large scale, homogenous. The lasting separation lies not between nations but between the body's inner space and its own eventual dissolution.

There can be little doubt that Coetzee's bodies defamiliarise space, the space they occupy as well as the space surrounding them. Defamiliarising means bringing to the surface some of the less discursively popular themes (as Tristram Shandy's haphazard account does). Space, something usually taken for granted, is given more attention in the Coetzeean novel, and can be used as an example.

Chapter Six: Sex

This chapter aims to explore the subject of sex through Coetzee's treatment of the body. Firstly it will investigate how the sexualised body can be read when it is, as Foucault says "under the sway of […] concupiscence and desire". Whilst the power of sex over the body is recognised in the fiction, it is also deconstructed, as the following two parts of the chapter will argue. The idea of morbid eroticism as a defamiliarising mode of the body will be discussed before the chapter analyses the reasons why some of Coetzee's bodies turn away from sex in a statement of "libidinal withdrawal".

In The History of Sexuality, Foucault explains how we live in a paradigm whereby sex has become so powerful that in many respects the human condition has been substrated to it:

> In the space of a few centuries, a certain inclination has led us to direct the question of what we are, to sex. Not so much to sex as representing nature, but to sex as history, as signification and discourse. We have placed ourselves under the sign of sex, but in the form of a *Logic of Sex*, rather than a *Physics*. We must make no mistake here: with the great series of binary oppositions(body/soul, flesh/spirit, instinct/reason, drives/consciousness) that seem to refer sex to a pure mechanics devoid of reason, the West has managed not only, or not so much, to annex sex to a field of rationality, [...] but to bring us almost entirely, our bodies, our minds, our individuality, our history – under the sway of a logic of concupiscence and desire (Foucault The History 78).

Sex is an important recurring theme in the fiction and it is woven into each novel at some level. However, whether coitus is successful or satisfying or not is secondary in the light of the need to explore the dimension of the post-coital condition as a cognitive mapping of the post-colonial condition.

Sex and Power

Foucault explains how in the Western modern "logic of sex", the entire being of the individual, including the body, is absorbed in sex. David Lurie, for instance, dramatises his situation and claims to be a sort of convert to a ludicrous religion of "Eros" as he cannot tame his desire. Sexual desire causes Lurie to see things differently and, in a sense, his "logic of sex" is strange and defamiliarising. He views his own sexuality (to take a position) in a repulsive symbol of concupiscence (the snake); he is attracted to Melanie as a counterpart to the order of the world he lives in and even calls himself "the servant of Eros", a description which turns out not to be entirely absurd when a whole catalogue of former lovers is revealed near the end of Disgrace (192).

David Lurie is victim of his own Romanticism; his teachings of poetry and the chamber opera on Byron have turned inwards on his person, uttering themselves through the powerful, excessive language of sexual desire. Like Byron, he becomes amoral and lustful, altogether too extreme and implausible for the real world: "he uses Romantic language to justify the fact that 'nothing will stop him' – asserting that this desire

emanates “from the quiver of Aphrodite, goddess of the foaming waves” (25).
But Lurie is far from the truth in his state of libidinal drive. For all these fine words, though, the physical reality is that he is considered, at the very least, to have “sexually harassed Melanie” (Kossew “The Politics” 158). David Lurie loses himself in the power of sexual desire completely and becomes a slave. In many ways, out of all of Coetzee’s novels, Disgrace is the one that most illustrates the power of sex on the body.

The reader notices in the above extracts how it is “desire” that seems to be the power driving Lurie’s libido, which is to be expected (after all, we tend to associate desire with sexuality). However, it should be noted that Elizabeth Costello offers a subtle nuance in discussing the effect of physical desire on the body. This (sexual) desire is discussed carefully by Elizabeth Costello as she searches for a better word to describe (physical) attraction than then slightly abstract “desire”:

> if *desire* is too rude a word then what of *appetency*? Appetency and chance: a powerful duo, more than powerful enough to build a cosmology on, from the atoms and the little things with nonsense names that make up atoms to Alpha Centauri and Cassiopeia and the great dark back of beyond. The gods and ourselves, whirled helplessly around by the winds of chance, yet pulled equally towards each other, towards not only B and C and D but towards X and Y and Z and Omega too (Elizabeth Costello192).

"Appetency" comes from the Latin appetere (the same word is at the root of the word "appetite"), meaning craving. The word is more physical in connotative value since it associates the highly corporeal acts of eating and the sensation of hunger with desire. Costello's epiphany draws an image of cosmic scale where erotic forces and "chance" drive everything. By substituting desire for appetency, Coetzee is attempting to move from the overtly concupiscent to the more anatomical. This idea is developed in his essay "Newton and a Transparent Scientific Language" (1982): Coetzee sees Newton's desire as one "to get beyond stating the mathematical relations between idealised bodies to stating in 'real' terms relations between elements of the physical universe" (Attwell Doubling 188).

Thus, a discussion of the sexual body in Coetzee flows into a discussion on desire and therefore illustrates the larger strain of defamiliarisation in the writing that creates a lexical field that is extremely physical. Elizabeth Costello's epiphany on desire, although it comes "as desire relaxes its grip on her body" (191), uses words such as "aching" and "taste" to relay sexual pleasure. In this way, and in a similar light to chapter 2 of this study, we could argue that the distinctly physical power of sex forces distinctly physical imagery.

The body being empowered by sexuality (meaning its being aroused, or in a state of appetency or desire) is not the only way that power and sex can be viewed. It is more the effect that the sexual body has on its outside and the extent to which this effect is powerful that makes a study of the relationship between sex and power revealing. In

In the Heart of the Country, The Master of Petersburg and Disgrace, the sexual mode of the body attributes the vicissitudes of the political world to the effect that incongruous couplings take place, defying normative and intrapersonal values. If sexual intercourse is a rare but strong statement of the body in Coetzee's fiction; it is not merely because it carries morbid and self-destructive tones with it, but more because it is a statement that, in the centres of consciousness of the various protagonists, seems to run counter to the voices of the mind rather than with them in a contra-intuitive manner, underscoring a difference. It is through this relationship of conflict that the sexualised body is empowered.

The author is by no means attempting to create erotic prose, but on the contrary an unsatisfied, detached narrative focalisation. Indeed, the reader is constantly surprised by the innovative and perverse reactions characters have to others when aroused; the unifying thread the reader encounters is this hauntingly joyless bizarreness.

However, the overall relative discreetness of Coetzee's treatment of sex is such that it becomes counter-discourse, a palinode to the Western sex-heavy vision of the body.[77] Sexual acts enter a virtual space in which other frontiers, crucial to social order and the maintenance of power, predominate. We see this specifically in the relationships between

[77] Foucault, in The History of Sexuality 1 (1979), remarks how, "sexuality, far from being repressed in the society of that period [the Enlightenment and Victorian Ages], on the contrary was constantly aroused" (Foucault 148). Needless to say, this trend only accentuates itself in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, displacing its parameters from the illicit, the taboo, and the hidden, to the commercial, the exteriorised, and the openly adulated. In Foucault's study the "truth of sex" (57) is divided into an "ars erotica" in the tradition of "China, Japan, India, Rome, the Arabo-Moslem societies" where "truth is drawn from pleasure itself" as opposed to the paradigm in which we find ourselves, a "scientia sexualis" where sex is "geared to a form of knowledge-power strictly opposed to the art of initiations and the masterful secret: […] the confession" (58).

the magistrate and the barbarian girl in Waiting for the Barbarians as well as between David Lurie and Melanie in Disgrace. By having an affair with the enemy, the magistrate compromises his professional function and enters into conflict with the status quo. In the case of the barbarian girl, the magistrate's obsession with her body is not only an act against the Empire, but a movement away from the larger Empire of meaning: "[e]ach word designating a part of the female body is immediately invested with a libidinal value as soon as that which links the signifiers is absent from this representation, that which is unrepresentable, that is to say the sexual drive itself" (Samin 8 [my translation from the French]).[78]

David Lurie's affair with his student Melanie, an infraction of the professional code of the teacher, is the catalyst for the undoing of his clerical function and the beginning of a downward cycle. David Lurie's libido creates conflict in its wake when he becomes infatuated with Soraya and Melanie. In both cases he disrupts the power structure of the family, discovering that Soraya has children and through his tempestuous meetings with Melanie's parents and boyfriend (although he later seeks atonement from the parents, a statement of the mind over the body, but symbolically enacted by the body).

In these cases the protagonists defy structures of institutionalised power (The University and The Empire) through sexual and sexualised actions; they both change their psychomachia to rebel against the paternal voice that has hitherto dominated them. The step taken affects their lives and the plot; indeed, from a more formalistic perspective we

[78] "Chaque mot désignant une partie du corps féminin est immédiatement investi d'une valeure libidinale dès lors que ce qui lie les signifiants entre eux est ce qui est absent de la représentation, ce qui est irreprésentable, c'est à dire la pulsion sexuelle elle-même".

can see the imperative for existential decisions in a plot or narrative – nothing can happen if critical choices are not made, rebellions not undertaken, without peripeteia.

This traditional role of sexuality as key in the dominion of male power is enounced clearly in Coetzee's essay on Samuel Richardson's Clarissa (1748): "Clarissa represents the greatest challenge that Lovelace has yet faced: a girl of irreproachable virtue and great self-possession, a member of a family that, without having any lineage, is nevertheless powerful. Bringing down the girl would bring down the family, teach it a lesson" (Stranger 29). It is through rape, the wrenching of her from the *vita angelica*, that this "bringing down" can be achieved. "[T]he sheer physicality of gestation and motherhood will be an ingenious humiliation, a way of reducing her to her body again" (32).

As much feminist commentary has asserted, rape is not simply about sexual possession. Rape carries more deeply seated overtones of power than physical humiliation; it is the expression of male power. Andrea Dworkin argues that the woman "experiences the total debasement of impersonal possession, in which the injury done to her is what gratifies the possessor" (Dworkin 90/91)**.** It can be argued that David Lurie is subconsciously gratified by the fact that in his first sexual encounter with Melanie she is "passive throughout" (Disgrace 19): he objectifies her body as a "marionette" (24), a puppet whose strings he now pulls. In the essay on Clarissa, Coetzee reminds us that "the seducer drives home the message that woman is body": the objectification of the woman's body is more than an

abstraction necessary for the physicality of sex; it inscribes a dialectic in which the woman is silenced and, to come back to David Lurie's words, "passive".

On a more explicitly territorial note, Hendrik's raping of Magda in In the Heart of the Country empowers him, just as Pollux's impregnating of Lucy in Disgrace signifies, in highly corporeal fashion, his acquisition of new territory: the respective farms will hitherto belong to them as the women they rape become their bodily possessions. Furthermore, the rapes dispossess the fathers of their daughters, creating out of their (the daughters') bodies concubines to the rapists that re-instate a new type of authority.

The act of forced intercourse and the period of gestation are so uniquely physical in their form and consequence that the greatest social boundaries can and are enhanced by them, not necessarily in any positive way: the new shape produced by the body, this existential crisis, alienates the woman from her previous points of reference, especially if the progenitor of the foetus is socially incompatible and raped her (so that she enters into the trans-social type-cast of the 'fallen' or 'disgraced' woman). Lucy's rape on the farm, Magda's rape by Hendrik and Melanie's pseudo-rape or rape (this disjunctive syllogism remains forcibly open) by David Lurie all cause or compound the women's social stigmata, but in each case it is these very women that show the most resilience and exercise the power of absorption: Lucy chooses to keep the child and compromises willingly with a new dispensation, something her father cannot do; Magda allows the rape and encourages it; Melanie overcomes the potential ostracism she might have

suffered at the hands of the Capetonian community and goes on to become a relative success in her gaudy play.

Thus it can be seen that the relationship between the sexualised body and power is more sophisticated than a mere issue of male force prescribed over female passivity; indeed, the dynamics of the examples given above illustrate that it is in the living out of such trauma that the "suffering body" stakes its claim, defying the power structure of rank and gender. Lucy, like Clarissa, rises above the stigma compounded by her role in the family to choose her own way, irrespective of the will of the father. "'She is absolutely impenetrable, least of all by rape' writes Terry Eagleton of Clarissa. 'The reality of the woman's body', evinced by Clarissa even after the rape, is that it 'resists all representations and remains stubbornly recalcitrant to (the man's) fictions'" (Stranger 39).

It is not only through rape that the family – a nexus of social cohesion, pressure and power - is dissected and exposed to a maximum. In Boyhood, the aunts, father and mother cannot live up to the models their title suggests, at least not in the eyes of John. The link with sexuality and the body is that in Youth, the continuation of Boyhood after an ellipsis, he finds his body drawn to unorthodoxy, hence, subconsciously to an alternative power structure. John muses on the thought of incest, an example of the will of the body recreating the boundaries of the family:

> [w]hat is it about his girl cousins, even the idea of them, that sparks desire in him? Is it simply that they are forbidden? Is that how taboo operates: creating desire by forbidding it? Or is the genesis of his desire less abstract: memories of tussles, girl against boy, body to body, stored since childhood and released now in a rush of sexual feelings? That, perhaps, and the promise of ease, of easiness: two people with a history in common, a country, a family, a blood intimacy from before the first word was spoken (Youth 126).

At a conscious level John wishes to transgress the boundaries of family through the will of the body. Subconsciously he is drawn to his cousins because of the reason that they are strictly forbidden: they are a mirror of himself. The fact that they come from the same blood lineage is John's acte manqué towards a reconciliation of himself with his ego. John must reinvent himself in a world of rules, he must be greater than petty conventions if he is to empower himself to attain what he calls "the sacred flame of Art", but at the same time he must not think that he can run from his origins: thus he cannot refute the attraction he feels for the cousins.[79] Incest would be a suitable act of transgression to assert himself, but he does not indulge it, opting rather for the cousin's friend, Marianne: "an air of illegitimacy hangs excitedly about her" (Youth 128).

John's sense of freedom in his imaginative transgression is contrasted with the danger his cousins pose to his own sense of individuality. In this way, the sexualised body

[79]In The Sane Society (1956), Erich Fromm writes: [w]hile Freud saw in the incestuous fixation only a negative, pathogenic event, Bachofen saw clearly both the negative and the positive aspects [...]. The positive aspect is a sense of affirmation of life, freedom, and equality [...]. The negative aspects [...]: man is blocked from developing his individuality and his reason [by being bound "to nature, to blood, to soil"] (Fromm 45).

deconstructs the value-laden power house of the family. Moral and political boundaries that inhibit the ego are surpassed through the actions of the sexual body. Indeed, the libido takes over desire itself in the grim description Coetzee gives of David Lurie and Bev Shaw's "congress": "…he does his duty. Without passion but without distaste either" (Disgrace 150). "This is what I have to get used to, this and even less than this" David Lurie tells himself, viewing the act, as does Michael K, as one of charity: "he has been succoured".

Morbid Eroticism

The sexualised body is by no means a happy place in Coetzee's fiction. Sexual satisfaction in the conventional sense, between consenting partners, does not exist: there is a distinct morbidity expressed in sexual encounters (although it would be inappropriate and too simplistic to speak of absolute negative and positive experiences in Coetzee's universe due to the highly permeable and diffuse nature of events).

In In the Heart of the Country Magda hints at sexuality in the unnerving comparison of the stools of her and her father: "Sliding aside the wooden lid I straddle his hellish gust, bloody, feral, the kind that flies love best, flecked, I am sure, with undigested flesh barely mulled over before pushed through. Whereas my own […] is dark, olive with bile, hard-packed, kept in too long, old, tired: We heave and strain" (34/35).

The infernal description of the father's faeces represents the strange mixture of admiration and disgust Magda has for him. The latrine is a place of intimate corporeal exchange between daughter and father. By using the words "heave and strain", the author may remind the reader of an earlier description of the father and his new bride: "they sweat and strain, the farmhouse creaks through the night" (10). Magda is still at a stage of primitive sexuality, her abject relation with sexuality: knotted with the physical presence and symbolic authority of the father, demonstrates a lack of self-development and degenerate introversion. Like the turd she creates, Magda is long overdue in her deflowering. She sees her father's faeces as she sees his sexuality: disgusting yet enigmatically powerful. We must remember that Magda is attracted to her father in a neurotic, suggestive way (64-66). If we follow the extract the symbolism becomes more dynamic and explorative:

> […][t]hen it becomes Hendrik's charge to inspect the bucket and, if it prove not to be empty, to empty it in a hole dug far away from the house, and wash it out, and return it to its place. Where exactly the bucket is emptied I do not know; but somewhere on the farm there is a pit where, looped in each other's coils, the father's red snake and the daughter's black embrace and sleep and dissolve" (In the Heart 35).

The ending of this excerpt carries sexual connotations through the totemic usage of the snake, a currency explored in Disgrace to describe David Lurie and Soraya's congress. More complexly the roles Hendrik has and will have in the novel are foreshadowed

through his function. It is he who consummates the metaphorical mating, buries the ignominy of it and allows the father his phallic dominion over the farm. However he disposes of the waste in a "pit" that reminds the reader of the bottomless pit (the hell motif is already suggested in the emphasis on flies with the use of the word "hellish") but also hints at the grave Magda will dig for her father. The hell-pit as a symbol functions as a signifier of lust: a giant orifice. The fact that it cannot be located ("somewhere on the farm") gives it the strange power of an unverified belief: it is the elusive unknown that constitutes the axiom (in this case, Magda's progressive insanity). Once the father has been removed, it will be Hendrik's "charge" to replace the patriarch and re-instate a male regime, one he marks by raping Magda and symbolises when he wears the father's clothes (106). On the evening of their first congress, Magda's hand is "held" over his "man's part" by Hendrik's hand (116), furthering symbolically his new hegemonic position.

Coetzee clearly understands sex in its most poignant expression as an animalistic appropriation of power, marked by connotations of death. His disturbed narrator of the 'Vietnam Project', Eugene Dawn, portrays his intercourse with Marilyn, his wife, in distinctly scatological and deathly terms: " [t]he word which at such moments flashes its tail across the heavens of my never quite extinguished consciousness is *evacuation*: my seed drips like urine into the futile sewers of Marylin's reproductive ducts" (Dusklands 8). The description abounds with the imagery of sterility ("futile"), loss ("evacuation"), and waste ("sewers"). Eugene Dawn describes the sexual relationship he has with Marylin as type of descent as the "seed drips" downwards. "The descent into death is

held to be synonymous with penile descent into the woman, which ends eventually and inevitably in detumescence" (Dworkin 221).

In her lesson 'Eros", Elizabeth Costello explains how sex and mortality are the two "inventions" that humans experience but gods do not; both involve "contortions" and "relaxings" (189). More often the commonalities of death and sex are translated into an unwelcoming language. Through their morose, idiosyncratic sexualities, characters such as the magistrate, Fyodor Mikhailovich and Magda make sex a sorrowful, grey affair. In The Master of Petersburg Fyodor descends into a type of Lake Coctix in Dante's "Inferno*"*:

> [i]n the act there is nothing he can call pleasure or even sensation. It is as though they are making love through a sheet, the grey, tattered sheet of his grief. At the moment of climax he plunges back into sleep as into a lake. As he sinks Pavel rises to meet him. His son's face is contorted in despair [...] [t]his is the vision in its ugly extremity that rushes at him out of the vortex of darkness into which he is descending inside the woman's body (The Master 56).

The sleep that Fyodor Mikhailovich plunges into is the deathly sleep that so many of Coetzee's characters go through in the opus after or during sex; it the post-coitus coma. The lake of sleep in the passage becomes a vortex of darkness and then the woman's sexual organ. Fyodor Mikhailovich is attempting to attain some knowledge of (or even spiritual communion) with his stepson Pavel. He hopes that he can achieve this by

reaching within Pavel's lover's body, to attain a physical topos where Pavel has been. However, the mind must enter into a different dimension for this meeting to take place, and sleep allows for dreams where physical laws can be defied. Since the inside of the body is unseen, it becomes the site of speculation. Eugene Dawn and Fyodor Mikhailovich imagine sequences that correspond to what they *feel* but do not *know*.

Although the primary function of sexual intercourse is positive, Coetzee's characters tend to experience it through strains of indifference, bleakness, sorrow and overall darkness, drowsing off after the act and even during it. In this example the sleep functions as a type of interregnum between living and dead where ghosts can be seen. Intrinsically, it would seem, sleep and death are similar in that they cut the body off from the conscious mind and render it slack, supine and still. In Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet and Macbeth, Shakespeare develops the idea of sleep as "death's counterfeit" or "death of each day", "that sleep of death" marking the Western literary archetype.

In Waiting for the Barbarians the magistrate's relationship with the barbarian girl is, on the surface of the narrative, chaste. He falls asleep instead of reaching a climax; at least there is a transposition of the erotic in the description of the sleep that envelops him. Indeed, the magistrate claims to have "no desire to enter" (32) the body and yet leaves the reader in the dark as to whether he penetrates her or not through the vague, sexually heightened descriptions of their actions: "First comes the ritual of the washing, for which she is now naked. I wash her feet, as before, her legs, her buttocks. My soapy hand travels between her thighs, incuriously, I find". There is no object to "find": the sentence

becomes a syntactical coitus interruptus. However, the interaction is highly physical and intimate, tantamount to the act. Rather than take the absolutist, convinced path of the final ejaculation, he sleeps to reach the feeling of emptiness one could equate with the serenity after the orgasm: "[b]ut more often in the very act of caressing her I am overcome with sleep as if poleaxed, fall into oblivion sprawled upon her body, and wake an hour or two later dizzy, confused, thirsty. These dreamless spells are like death to me, or enchantment, blank, outside time" (Waiting 33).

Earlier in the novel he falls asleep under similar circumstances:

> I wash slowly, working up a lather, gripping her firm-fleshed calves, manipulating the bones and tendons of her feet, running my fingers between her toes. I change my position to kneel not in front of her but beside her, so that, holding a leg between elbow and side, I can caress the foot with both hands. I lose myself in the rhythm of what I am doing. I lose awareness of the girl herself. There is a space of time which is blank to me: perhaps I am not even present. When I come to, my fingers have slackened, the foot rests in the basin, my head droops (30).

The washing, a fetish the magistrate brings into play, can be seen as a figurative extreme unction or embalming of the body before the metaphoric sleep of death. The magistrate is cleaning away the dirt that binds the girl to the outside, keeping her alive as a symbiotic organism. Whilst he wishes to render her sterile, "blank", as it were, for the deathly climax, he awakens "slack" and drooping, like a dead body. The magistrate experiences a

period of achrony, timelessness, a zone where other boundaries and social, temporal frontiers are no longer pertinent. By losing awareness the magistrate is freeing himself of the burden of his conscious mind and simultaneously achieving a type of inanity through detachment represented by the snowy dreams he has of the faceless snowman. Subconsciously the magistrate propels himself towards a social death by interacting so physically with the girl; the metaphorical washing away of the dirt that marks her barbarian enemy identity causes him to step out of his prescribed rank and duties and place himself in conflict with the state. The will of the body is so strong that it can shut the mind off and bring it to later, unaware of what occurred but finding the body it inhabits is now on the other side of the fence. On another level it can be argued that the magistrate's obsession with the girl's scars and injuries are signifiers of his own latent liebestod. After all, he exercises his choice systematically and finds himself in situations of incarceration and torture that he could have avoided.

Other novels carry the motif of sleep and sex: in Disgrace David Lurie, in his first congress with Melanie, "finds the act pleasurable, so pleasurable that from its climax he tumbles into blank oblivion" (Disgrace 19). In the final, determining pages of Foe, Susan Barton and Foe have sexual intercourse and then, before embarking on an oneiric conversation about Friday, enter into a slumber: "Foe lay still so long that I thought he had gone to sleep. But just as I myself began to grow drowsy, he spoke" (140). The reader is not sure whether the culminating "purple passage" is from the conscious or unconscious mind, whether it is dream or reality. Just as sex melts boundaries, sleep

throws the characters into a frame of mind that is open enough to imagine Friday differently.

Unlike the canonical masters of the erotic like the Marquis de Sade, Gustave Flaubert, DH Lawrence, Georges Bataille and Henry Miller, Coetzee tends to let his characters be trapped in a logico-positivist understanding of sex that renders the entire enterprise somewhat sterile: "[u]nresisting, he follows, does his best, goes through with the act, even pretends at the last to be carried away" (Youth 5). This is not to say that characters are not sexually active: on the contrary, all but two novels (Life & Times of Michael K and Age of Iron) allow sexual issues to predominate in a number of interactions. Nonetheless, the spirit found in embodiments such as Eugene Dawn in Dusklands, John in Youth, Magda in In the Heart of the Country, and David Lurie in Disgrace is one of regrettable physical expediency: Magda, for example, does "not like the smell of his [Hendrik's] seed" (120), yet succumbs to Hendrik in a desperate attempt to achieve some sort of normalcy. Elizabeth Costello in "The Humanities in Africa" performs acts of caritas romana and fellatio on dying patients out of compassion rather than sexual appetency, using the sexual body as a type of gift. In these novels the author moves away from the Lawrentian-Freudian libidinal weltanschauung. The reaction against the histrionic melodrama of the suggestive is embedded in an awkward, disengaged prose.

Sex and sexuality, interwoven with issues of power and death, remain contentious issues that involve a widening of discourse on the body. In remaining misunderstood in this way, it is an endlessly fertile, re-interpretable ground for poetic expression: the sexual act

unites us in irrational, emotional and unprecedented ways. “What can one make of episodes like this, unforeseen, unplanned, out of character? [asks Elizabeth Costello after fellating the aging patient] Are they just holes, holes in the heart, into which one steps and falls and then goes on falling?” (155). It is very much in this scope that Coetzee allows the body power of expression in his novels.

Libidinal Withdrawal

Coetzee suggests that sex is something of an end in itself, a vital manifestation of the body, but by no means *the* axis of appetency. Desire in the crudest sense, desire for sexual gratification, is not the mechanism the plot is hinged on. It would be more astute to speak of the body using the sexual mode as an idiom of desire to transgress the self. To follow Elizabeth Costello, we could say that the word appetency should be used to describe sexual craving as desire represents something that is less organic, less corporeal.

Desire, so commonly associated with sexuality, is a necessary element in depiction of any character: only a character like Melville’s extraordinarily unresponsive Bartleby in Bartleby the Scrivener (1853) can be considered beyond it. There are, needless to say and in cohesion with the overall plurality in the works, other approaches (than that of concupiscence and desire) to the sexual question evoked in the literally and figuratively asexual characters of Friday and Michael K. Both live out a celibacy that reminds the reader of the clerical philosophy of abstention, especially in the character of K, who lives parsimoniously like a hermit, requiring as little of the world as possible. In a Coetzeean

society where sexual drives connive with an ugly history, celibacy becomes an interesting position.

Friday, on the other hand, is frozen in the narrative voice of Susan Barton, and she views him primarily as an animal that responds to tone and repeated exercises, existing only in the scope of the education she is trying to impose on him. He does not have the leverage of voice that Michael K does in the third-person focalised narrative that allows the reader in and out of his mind. However, Friday has been mutilated (119) and can only extend his essence through dance and body language, whose semiotics Susan Barton cannot understand. The significance of sex comes into the equation with the knowledge that Friday is, most probably (the possibility is evoked but not substantiated), a eunuch; Susan Barton, who empowers herself in relationships through sex, is left even more powerless to enter the being of Friday. By being metaphorically and, possibly literally, castrated he lacks the physical potency that embodies a full character: he becomes a cipher, a malleable space for the desire of others, the literary projection of an author for example. "Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others" (Foe 121).

Thus Friday has been denied the weapon of phallogocentric command: language. The mutilation of his tongue becomes a symbol for the representation of Friday in Defoe's Robinson Crusoe (1718), a novel in which one could argue that the author (or more subtly the narrative, Crusoe himself) projects onto Friday arguments and ideas that are not genuine reflections but undisguised stereotypes. In the original Crusoe narrates Friday

in a paternalistic tone, despite the other's clever questioning of Crusoe on the subject of God and other inconsistencies in his philosophies. In his argumentation, Friday no longer comes across as an islander but an author and philosopher of the Enlightenment. In Coetzee's version, Susan Barton struggles to generate any consistent mimetic behaviour in Friday and is left thoroughly frustrated by his abstruseness.

Hence libidinal withdrawal is in fact another way that the body empowers itself. Because Friday does not speak and seems asexual, his body becomes a thoroughly defamiliarised type of auto-signifier. "The body of the Other can represent only its own physicality, its own strangeness" (Boehmer "Transfiguring" 270).

Whether Friday really has been castrated or not is irrelevant in light of his asexual behaviour: Susan Barton cannot trap him in a paradigm of gender and sex and he therefore escapes interpretation, resisting simple classification and remaining elusive to the end.

The idea of libidinal withdrawal is discussed by Attwell in turning to Magda:

> [l]ibidinal withdrawal is usually censured because it undermines the establishment of exogamous relations. Magda calls herself one of the "melancholy spinsters" who are "lost to history" because she has no role to play in reproducing the history, through marriage, which her father represents. Being lost to history means

> that she does not have access to a subject-position that is inside the history-making self representations offered by the father (Attwell J.M. 61).

Magda thinks she might have entered normative societal living after her congresses with Hendrik ("Am I finally a woman?"(117), but she cannot reconstruct any coherent system of signification once she has killed her father: sex in itself is not as John imagines somewhat naively in Youth, an automatic entry into any "sacred flame". Rather than being an end in itself, it is a means to an end of desire.

Thus withdrawal is a complexity that allows the characters alternative paths of power to those prescribed by the group and history. It can take either a negative or positive mode. The metaphor is one that runs through many novels at other levels of disengagement than the sexual (David Lurie, Elizabeth Costello, Michael K, for instance, all define their personal integrity by not participating in public rituals: David Lurie refuses to offer an apology to the hearings committee, Elizabeth Costello burdens herself with an uncompromised vegetarianism that exposes the normative carnivorous ethos as inhumane, and Michael K is to be remembered by his refusal to follow the rebels, accept charity or seek friendship in simulacra such as other people and/or ideas). Characters gain their individuality and strength through this. Friday and Michael K, despite their heavy social stigmata, retain their integrity by abstaining from sex altogether.

Conclusion

The central argument of this chapter has been that the sexual body is an empowered body, but at the same time that Coetzee's use of morbid eroticism and – in rarer but equally salient instances – libidinal withdrawal, allows the reader to contemplate sex in original and unconventional terms.

The major characters of the thirteen novels can be divided roughly into two categories: those who are sexually active to different degrees (Eugene Dawn, Jacobus Coetzee, Magda, Susan Barton, Elizabeth Curren, David Lurie, Fyodor Mikhailovich, the magistrate, John (in Youth and Elizabeth Costello), Elizabeth Costello and Paul Rayment), and those who are not (Michael K and Friday). The reader sees that the sexually potent characters are story-tellers, conforming to the phallogocentric metaphor for power assertion: sowing their seed and their words.

Desire and concupiscence are key terms in the Coetzeean opus, but they are by no means binary opposites, rather expressions of a single statement of power. We will be reminded of Elizabeth Costello's insistence on the word "appetency" to describe physical desire as a more suitable and specific term than the more abstract word "desire". In Disgrace, the heavily self-absorbed David Lurie is unconscious of his own narcissism as he exercises his sexual body from a position of authority. He is ("to his mind") master of his desire and his sexuality in the old world, but this situation cannot sustain itself. As in In the Heart of the Country, the reader is thrust into a world of the failing, crumbling patriarch

who can no longer rely on his sexual potency for empowerment and must yield to a new generation, people whose lives he cannot control precisely because of their own somatic power of sexuality. Lucy emphasises her biological rights and David Lurie, alienated by such a reality, is silenced into resignation and womanliness: “hiding his face in his hands, he heaves and heaves and finally cries” (Disgrace 199). We are reminded of the image of the magistrate, who, when tortured, is dressed in a woman’s frock, as if to accentuate his loss of potency.

By investigating the different strains that Coetzee extracts from the sexual encounter, social, deathly, withdrawn, in a style largely devoid of strong emotions, this chapter has shown how sexuality, particularly male sexuality, is given a renewed significance. Sex, so central in a Freudian twentieth century vision, is given a different type of authority in the writings: not so much an act of unity and progression as a cold statement of the body’s needs. Coetzee develops an economy of sexuality in which the real conflicts amongst his protagonists are played out through their bodies. This vision of sex and sexuality is another example of how the body is used as defamiliarising agent.

Chapter Seven: The Bodies of Animals

Of the myriad of marine, terrestrial, insect and ornithological species used in the opus are the seal, porpoise, whale, shark, lobster, octopus, jellyfish, anemone, fish, toad, snake, spider, lizard, chimpanzee, ape, dog, cat, horse, parrot, cow, sheep, hen, chicken, pig, goat, buffalo, fox, cat, lion, leopard, panther, jaguar, antelope, mole, mouse, squirrel, butterfly, many different birds, the bat, beetle, moth, ant and maggot.

What is singular about this plethora of animals used is that they are not organised into a great chain of being or used in any conventional symbolic sense. The animal corresponds to the human, but in a zone of what Costello in The Lives of Animals calls "fullness" and "embodiedness" (33). The animal simile enhances the essence of the corporeal. On a more historico- philosophical level, Coetzee is uprooting the "Western discourse of man versus beast" (The Lives 25) just as he is allowing us to see beneath the skin what is hidden in orthodox classical literary imagery.

It is of great irony (but at the same time historically and dialectically logical) that the word 'animal' derives from the Latin animus, meaning soul or breath. Animals are considered soulless automata in the Cartesian perspective that dominates Western thinking. To be more precise, however, the root is the adjective animalis (living, breathing) and the concept of animus is as much a physical one as it is metaphysical. It is with consciousness of the duality of the sign that Coetzee elaborates his animal imagery.

In ancient representation, animals were revered across the globe in the forms of hieroglyphs, cave paintings and coda. This pre-monotheistic vision of the world, still present in existing religions such as Jainism and Hinduism and numerous shamanisms, denotes a world where the animal and the human are constantly fused and compared, in some areas certain animals are even placed above humans and revered. Gods are fusions of the human and animal form; avatars of cycles that pertain to all life forms (creation, destruction, fertility, etc) in an "attentiveness that our faraway ancestors possessed" (The Lives 52). The significance of the body in this vision is paramount in Coetzee's understanding of the animal body as reminder of the human condition.

The Western canon, however, views animals as ancillary to humans. The role they serve in Western literature tends to be either decorative or, of course, for the purposes of literary fable where the non-human, animal and inanimate are used to suggest human ethical, non-corporeal traits. Aristotle, despite a certain tolerance for animals and limited attempt to reckon with their state of being, sees them as "low and brutish" (Aristotle 137) but defined Man bizarrely as "an unfeathered, two legged animal". In medieval Christian and Muslim texts, the bestial tends to be unclean or satanic, while the human form is divine.[80] Moreover, in the book of Genesis men and women are told (by God) to "replenish the earth, and subdue it" (Genesis 1:26 28) "have dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth" . What is clear is that the novel, already late chronologically as a genre - only considered to have emerged in the seventeenth century -

[80] Whilst there are numerous creatures with negative associations (pigs, snakes, toads, lizards, cats, dogs, worms, bats, eels, sharks, ravens, owls), only the dove, lamb and horse are represented in a consistently positive light.

no longer utilises animals intrinsically at the centre of representation excepting well-known fables or bestiaries by long-established masters such as Aesop and Lafontaine and more recent examples such as Kipling's Just So Stories (1902), James Thurber's Fables of Our Time (1940) Orwell's Animal Farm (1945), Richard Adams' Watership Down (1972) and Richard Bach's Jonathan Livingstone Seagull (1970) . In these modern examples, the tradition of fable is strong to the extent that, as has been the case throughout the last two thousand years, animals are seen more as reflections of social, political and mentalist human endeavours than anything else. "Beasts are neither incarnations of wickedness, nor sets of basic needs, nor crude mechanical toys, nor idiot children. They are beasts, each with his own very complex nature" (Midgely 38).[81]

In an age of growing vegetarianism in Western societies and animal rights activism, an age simultaneously where more species are extinct than ever before and many others threatened, Coetzee points out fundamental lacunae in the animal/human relationship that are generated by lack of adequate study of animals (particularly, as is developed in The Lives of Animals, the question of how to measure animal intelligence) and a desensitised approach to the general treatment of animals in the human world. We live in an environment where animals are treated as inferiors, despite the fact that "[t]he great apes also share our higher pleasures of curiosity and love of kin, and our deeper aches of boredom, loneliness and grief" (Pinker 228).

[81] This paradigm is one that the Western world still finds itself in, and through the extremely rare, poignant works that give the animal authority, such as Steven King's Cujo (1981), or Patrick Süskind's Pigeon (1995), we explore the psyche of a schizoid age of deliberate unknowing and fear where animals are domesticated but also slaughtered en masse for food production, this act engendering the fear of retribution which comes when the animals resort to bestiality. In this way they become symbols of horror and pity.

The major inroads made in Western philosophy towards a greater intrinsic study of animals, discounting Theophrastus, come in the voices of Jeremy Bentham, who "asserts that the principle of utility must take into account sentient animals, who can experience pleasure and pain, no less than human beings; thus he castigated the routine infliction of suffering on animals as human "tyranny"(DeGrazia 5); Schopenhauer, who "[m]aintained that moral living requires compassion for all beings that can suffer"(5) and, of course, Darwin, who unveiled what is now considered to be the true origin of species. Coetzee mentions other sources in the form of Elizabeth Costello's Tanner lectures, an apology for animal rights in The Lives of Animals, mentioning Mary Midgely and James Turner (61) as well as a line of poets reckoned with as "primitivists": "the line of Blake and Lawrence, of Gary Snyder in the United States, or Robinson Jeffers. Hemingway too" (52).

Similar poetic currents are all illustrated with varying intensities in the novels. When reading Disgrace, The Lives of Animals and Boyhood, a distinct consciousness emerges in the discourse of the narrative that questions the very principle of man's dominion abovementioned in the book of Genesis. This dominion held over animal life by humans is a grim one that amounts to morbidity; if humans subdue the wild world, they do it like Jacobus Coetzee or David Lurie: by exteriorising or internalising, painfully, the act of destruction they inflict on fauna. The overwhelming moral message that transcends the treatment of animals is a stance against cruelty and gratuitous death, but we must be careful not to stop here for the issue is more than sentimental.

However, it would be unsubstantiated to claim that Coetzee is attempting to return to the blurred metaphysical poetics of ancient scripts: "In Egypt they bricked in cats with their dead masters. Is that what I want: yellow eyes padding back and forth, searching for a way out of the dark cave?" (Age of Iron 32). In the fictional world of the novels, animals are in no way revered or endowed with mystical powers; on the contrary they suffer the same fate as humans, often living out human dilemmas instead of the human, as a substitute. The major difference with allegory in this pattern, it will be shown, is that the dilemmas and fate that face animals and humans are physical more than ideological or even philosophical. The body is the bridge between the two species in Coetzee's paradigm whereas the mind and meaningful ideas form the bridge in normative fable. In this way the use of fable is more body-centred than human-centred. The simile with the animal is a constant, "not by elevating animals to human status but by the converse: human lives are constantly compared with the lives – and deaths – of animals" (Heyns "Embodiment" 60). The centrality of the body to this question is a clear illustration of why animals are so vital in Coetzee's vision. One of the most striking and original aspects of his writing is the attention paid to animals and how they become part of a crucial web in which somatic laws govern.

The Lives of Animals can be considered as a theoretical outline of the ethical and perceptual dilemmas that run through much of the fiction in the human/animal relationships that are established, either in the imagery or in the plot. This chapter endeavours to develop this in three steps. Firstly an examination of how animals are 'reinvented' in the inverted structure of fable (to explore the animal in the human rather

than the other way round) will bring the reader to a better understanding of the philosophical implications of this stance.[82] The use of animals as indices of discourse shall then be investigated to show how the different characters' perception and treatment of animals reveal crucial features of their personalities. Finally the dog will be analysed due to its overwhelming significance in the writings; dogs are endowed with great emotional intelligence that allows for a communication between character and dog, as well as the transposition of characters' emotional self into a canine body.[83]

Inverted Fable

One of the most significant problems of knowledge is the point of view of the observer. Which criteria are used to observe the object and what exactly is observed? In The Lives of Animals Elizabeth Costello discusses another of Kafka's works, "Red Peter", in detail: the talking ape presents sufficient signs of an intelligence that is beyond cognitive science to prove that animals use systems and parts of the mind we do not. This is all part of a critique of behaviourism and the explicitly teleological assumptions it makes. Elizabeth Costello argues, as does this study, that the realm of animal existence is not within the grasp of language (although we may get close to it, on human terms, through poetry). The body, as an open system full of constant interactions, allows contact that the mind cannot comprehend.

[82] This highly innovative treatment of animals as bodies can be considered defamiliarisation in that animal (and human) bodies are "made strange" through this technique.
[83] To come back to Shklovsky's definition of defamiliarisation, in "Art as Technique", the increased amplitude of the canine body allows for a particular and unusual aspect of the body to predominate in Coetzee's fiction.

Coetzee, at the most general level, is inspecting the stance of the reader, or more specifically the act of reading. Fable, like allegory, operates in a moral framework: established values and conventions must be intact for it to have any meaning. Since the author gives a heuristic meaning to the world in his novels, it would be inaccurate to speak of traditional fable. Aesop (6th c. BC) and Lafontaine (Fables Choisies (1688-1694)), in the normative mode, characterise animals using human behavioural traits and discourse to describe types relative to Western European notions such as Greek myth, capitalism and Christianity. Coetzee responds to this tradition in a variety of ways that could be classed, approximately, into two interconnected schools: "normative" and "inverted".

Normative fable, whereby animals suggest human dilemmas, can be found in the opus, but the examples are scant and at no point is there pure fable, where animals actually speak. Instead, however, Coetzee uses the method of fable, albeit diluted, with a far keener realisation of the animal.

In citing Roy Pascal, Dovey reminds us that

> Kafka's parables, including those that like "Little Fable" seem closest to the form of the fable, are concerned with spiritual attitudes and problems, not with practical morals; one might almost say, indeed, that viewed in relation to the ancient tradition of fable they strangely and alarmingly lack all social concern for

> practical behaviour, for interpersonal and social obligations (pp. 144-145) (Dovey 327).

Just as Gregor Samsa's prime real concern is for physical comfort in Kafka's "Metamorphosis", so do Coetzee's characters contend with the desires of the soma over and above the metaphysical and social strata that drive civilisation.

In Waiting for the Barbarians the world of the barbarians is linked to the body and an atomic perception of it: the local doctor, a traditional healer, makes "aphrodisiacs out of bonemeal and lizards' blood" (11). The reader may be reminded of the reptilian metaphor for sexuality in the snake totem used to depict the coitus between David Lurie and Soraya in Disgrace. The association David Lurie makes with intertwined snakes as symbol for his coitus with Soraya is, subconsciously, a Christian understanding of the snake representing temptation. More distantly, the caducei (intertwined snakes around a winged sword) symbolises somatic liberation (of the chakras) through the mind. However, it is the nature of the snake that makes for the most immediate link with the human. This particular usage of the symbol of the snake is highly original and can be termed hermeneutical, contributing to the paradigm Coetzee is aiming at: David Lurie sees "intercourse between Soraya and himself [...] like the copulation of snakes [because it is] lengthy, absorbed, but rather abstract, rather dry, even, at its hottest" (2/3).

In this manner, animals are presented intrinsically rather than extrinsically:

> [a]t night when everything is still the cockroaches come out to explore. I hear, or perhaps imagine, the horny clicking of their wings, the scurry of their feet across the paved floor. They are lured by the smell of the bucket in the corner, the morsels of food on the floor; no doubt too by this mountain of flesh giving off its multifarious odours of life and decay. One night I am awoken by the feather-light tread of one crossing my throat. Thereafter I often jerk away during the night, twitching, brushing myself off, feeling the phantom probings of their antennae at my lips, my eyes. From such beginnings grow obsessions: I am warned (Waiting 87).

Astonishingly, in a dramatic reversal of perspective, the magistrate sees himself from the cockroaches' perspective as a "mountain of flesh". The passage is poignantly sensorial and highly defamiliarising. Like Borges' man who is dreamed into existence in "The Circular Ruins" (Labyrinths [1962]), the dream of the cockroaches, made up entirely of fragments from the alienating physical, bodily world of insects, takes on a real existence in the "twitching" of the man who cannot escape the psychosomatic "phantom probings" that taunt him. This technique of the dream becoming reality through embodiment of an idea can be found in other instances:

> I [...] fall asleep again, and dream of a body lying spread on its back, a wealth of pubic hair glistening liquid black and gold across the belly, up the loins, and down like an arrow into the furrow of the legs. When I stretch out a hand to brush the

> hair it begins to writhe. It is not hair but bees clustered densely atop one another: honey-drenched, sticky, they crawl out of the furrow and fan their wings (14).

The anthropocentric mind searches for the human form but finds the insect world instead. The subject of the dream of the magistrate mutates from the erotic human form to the alarming swarm of bees; the transition is from one composite body, a natural whole, to a cloister of smaller beings, a collective whole that can expand, dismember itself and come back together. By transforming pubic hairs into bees, the author explores a symbolic representation of the strong libidinal desire of the magistrate. However, his desire cannot be consummated in the form of a hard phallus and instead it dissipates in a cloud.

The presence of the animal form permeates the atmosphere of the novel with a powerful symbolic and physical presence. In the following passage the magistrate not only comes to terms with the ram in an unusual manner, he also explores the creature in extreme detail. Time seems to stand still:

> [o]ver my coat I wear my huge old bearskin [...] I come upon a waterbuck [...] [I] hear the splash of his hooves. Around his fetlocks I can make out circlets of ice-drops [...].With the buck before me suspended in immobility, there seems to be time for all things, time even to turn my gaze inward and see what it is that has robbed the hunt of its savour: the sense that this has become no longer a morning's hunting but an occasion on which either the proud ram bleeds to death

> on the ice or the old hunter misses his aim, that for the duration of this frozen moment the stars are locked (42).

The meeting is of prime significance since the magistrate undergoes a similar state of hyper-clarity when he recalls meeting the barbarian in the desert. The barbarians, like the ram, are the other, the body outside the Empire and, since its essence is usually hidden, it is observed with obsessive scrutiny:

> I am standing in front of the old man, screwing up my eyes against the wind, waiting for him to speak. [...] I watch his lips. At any moment now he will speak: I must listen carefully to capture every syllable, so that later, repeating them to myself, poring over them, I can discover the answer to a question which for the moment has flown like a bird from my recollection. I can see every hair of the horse's mane, every wrinkle of the old man's face, every rock and furrow of the hillside (131/132).

The magistrate defines a clear thread of commonness through the realms of human, animal and inanimate through anaphora ("every"). The reader may recall Plato's "statutes of homicide" in the Laws "requiring that a person convicted of murder be put to death [...]. This same course of action is then extended towards animals [...]. The same action is then extended to inanimate objects" (Scarry 293). The magistrate registers every detail with a new perception. The horse's mane becomes the man's hair, his wrinkles then

become part of the hillside, and the other is not only an alien body but an open, diffuse entity.

The Anaxagorian premise of all things belonging to each other seems to settle in the atmosphere of the encounter. Like the bees, the blurring of boundaries renders them common by reducing them to their irreducible atomic components. The reader must not forget that the action that allows for this clarity and mysterious perception is the great pain inflicted on the body since the magistrate is being tortured as he remembers.

What this thesis calls 'inverted fable' ranges from the usage of common idioms relative to the animal world ("[w]riting for Mr Whelan is not like stretching his wings; on the contrary, it is like huddling in a ball, making himself as small and inoffensive as he can"(Boyhood 140)) to more innovative, hermetic examples where a poetic interplay of established idiom and alternative exegesis likens existence to animals: "[t]here was a black fish swimming among all those white fish and that black fish was chosen to be me. I was a sister to none of them, I was ill chance itself, I was a shark, an infant black shark. Why did you not recognise it and cut its throat?" (In the Heart 77).

The relationship the magistrate has with the barbarian girl in Waiting for the Barbarians is made up of references to animals. Since their relationship is primarily extra-lingual, they rely on the semiotics of the body and this engenders comparisons with animals. At the high point of his homo-diegetic prose, the magistrate becomes, metaphorically, an animal: "I continue to swoop and circle around the irreducible figure of the girl [...].

What does she see? The protecting wings of a guardian albatross or the black shape of a coward crow afraid to strike while its prey yet breathes?"(89). "Would it make any difference to you if you were rooted in a cat or a dog instead of in me?" (49) he asks.

Age of Iron uses the animal to describe sickness; Elizabeth Curren uses the non-viviparous species to depict her perception of her body and the cancer that ravages it: "[l]ike insect eggs laid in the body of a host, now grown to grubs and implacably eating their host away. My eggs, grown within me" (64). Later in the novel she likens herself, or more precisely her soul as imprinted in the words on the pages, to the moth:

> it is the soul of me that will be left with you when this letter is over. Like a moth from its case emerging, fanning its wings: that is what, reading, I hope you will glimpse: my soul readying itself for other flights. A white moth, a ghost emerging from the mouth of the figure on the deathbed [...] all part of the metamorphosis, part of shaking myself loose from the dying envelope. [...] . There will be no need to close the windows and seal the chimneys to keep the white moth from flapping in during the night and settling on your brow [...]. The moth is simply what will brush your cheek ever so lightly as you put down the last page of this letter (130).

The symbol of the moth for the soul is by no means arbitrary; the moth incarnates death and rebirth and is well used to this effect. It perhaps draws on the medieval notion of the soul leaving the body via the mouth at the point of death. In this case the inanimate, abstract world of words and ideas is given a tangible form in the body of the moth. The

soft fluttering of the wings corresponds with the faint presence of the author in the writing. The use of verbs, again ("fanning", "flapping"), embodies the presence of the moth. The same creature is used for analogy in Waiting for the Barbarians by the magistrate: "[s]omeone gives me a push and I begin to float back and forth in an arc a foot above the ground like a great old moth with its wings pinched together, roaring, shouting" (133). In this example the moth is personified and thus used in the scope of normative fable. The roaring moth-man presents us with a violent conceit that juxtaposes the moth with the magistrate through the medium of pain.

At a deeper level, through this technique, "we too can embody animals-by the process called poetic invention that mingles breath and sense in a way that no one has explained and no one ever will" (The Lives 53). As other chapters have shown how the motif of stepping away from the normative reception is central to the writings, this focus of the same motif is a movement away from the anthropocentric norm, out of the "sterile maze [...][where] the standards by which animals are being measured [...] are human standards"(62).

The first step out of anthropocentrism we could consider is that Coetzee renders many of his characters mute: Friday, the barbarian girl, Vercueil, Michael K and Petrus, for example, go from total silence to uncommunicativeness. Therefore, instead of making animals talk, which is the first defamiliarising element of the bestiary and fable, he does the inverse and silences humans, or renders them stolid and cold at least. This is only the case in certain novels, for characters such as Elizabeth Costello, Foe, Magda, Eugene

Dawn, Jacobus Coetzee and Elizabeth Curren are loquacious for structural and thematic purposes. Nonetheless, Elizabeth Curren herself, whose narrative constitutes the novel, reduces herself to speechlessness when faced with the South African political atmosphere: "[w]hat am I entitled to do but sit in a corner with my mouth shut? I have no voice; I lost it long ago; perhaps I never had one. I have no voice, and that is that" (164).

The sharp mood that is born out of this technique is one that marks the reader and the prose on the whole, for in the silence of humans the corporeal semiotics of the animal are given more space to pervade and influence: "[i]n the clear silence of the morning I find an obscure sentiment lurking at the edge of my consciousness" (Waiting 42). The magistrate is clearly communicating with the waterbuck ram in an intuitive way and as a result, is brought to the edge of his thinking, this being an example of inverted fable.

Derek Attridge discusses animals in chapter seven ("Age of Bronze, State of Grace") in his work J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading, placing Coetzee in a "biocentric" tradition (185). In his analysis of Disgrace he refers to Derrida's "The Animal" (188): David Lurie "resists the generalization implicit in the category 'animal', preferring the impossible task of acknowledging the singularity of each creature".

Indeed, in attempting to acknowledge each dog individually, David Lurie breaches the gap between animal and human identity and refuses himself the complacency of glossing over the dogs as automata without personalities. Attridge's point supports the argument of this chapter, that the animal body is a common link with the human. The implications

of such a corporeal poetics are substantive as they force a new understanding not only of the way humans treat animals, but also of what it means to be living in a body – a truth animals share.

Animals and Discourse

The Lives of Animals creates a consciousness in the reader on the treatment of animals in human society through the emotionally charged voice of Elizabeth Costello:

> [l]et me say it openly: we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing which rivals anything that the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them (21).

However, in typically dialogic style, Coetzee also gives credence to the Western rationalist current of thought, enunciating it poignantly in the voices of Norma and Thomas O'Hearne in The Lives of Animals: "There isn't any such position! I know it sounds old-fashioned, but I have to say it. There is no position outside of reason where you can stand and lecture about reason and pass judgement on reason" (48). O'Hearne goes further: "the best performance the apes can put up is no better than that of a speech impaired human being with severe mental retardation" (62).

Despite Coetzee's writing against the inhumane treatment of animals, he employs a voice that denigrates animals in Foe: Susan Barton views animals with the rational biases of the Enlightenment: "how can I be sure that he does not think I am chattering to myself as a magpie or an ape does, for the pleasure of hearing the noise that I make, and feeling the play of my tongue, as he himself used to find pleasure in playing his flute" (57). In this sentence Susan Barton displays the Aristotelian presumption that animals are cerebrally inferior to humans as they are seen here as making sounds merely for the pleasure of it rather than to communicate. The presumption is an important one, for it underscores her fundamental misunderstanding of Friday.

Susan Barton's attitude towards Friday is trapped by its very identity: she cannot step outside of the bounds of her own perception of Friday, and since he is the most radical form of otherness she knows, associations are made with animals: "[w]henever I spoke to him I was sure to smile and touch his arm, treating him as we treat a frightened horse" (42). The equine symbol of work under man and man's oppression of the animal is only called into question here because of the slave status Friday must endure. Susan Barton refers to him as a horse en passant, but she exposes in this choice of imagery a normalisation of colonial values. Indeed, the author craftily represents a limited rationalist perspective of things in Susan Barton's own self-consciousness: "Perhaps I should have written more about the pleasure I took in walking barefoot in the cool sand of the compound, more about the birds, the little birds of many varieties whose names I never knew, whom I called sparrows for want of a better name" (51).

Although Susan Barton is exploring the question of the limitations of language against the infinite complexity of the real world, her careful observation of birds suggests her subconscious desire to be rescued or to flee the island, even though she displays a strong stoicism when she is on it. The limits of her vocabulary are solved in a utilitarian, economic manner by referring to all species of bird as sparrow.

Susan Barton places reason at the top of a chain of values where the lowest form is that of the excessive and bestial: "I might easily have been cast away alone on an island where rain never fell, or else on the island home of some foreign adventurer gone mad with solitude, naked, bestial, living on raw flesh" (25) The 'beast', from the perspective of the Enlightenment, is the antithesis of reason, it is the vast unknown world outside the bounds of logic,[84] a metaphor for the island: "have you never been struck of a sudden by the living, breathing quality of this island, as if it were some great beast from before the Flood that has slept through the centuries insensible of the insects scurrying on its back, scratching an existence for themselves?"(125).

In chapter 4 of Mary Midgely's Beast and Man (1995), the concept of 'beast' according to Plato, Aristotle and Kant is explored. Midgely shows how the metaphysical, logical and ethical definitions of the bestial as a discourse between "Beast Within" and the "Rational Soul" (Midgely 42) have marked Western consciousness. The "wicked" beast is none other than the potential for evil in every being, totemised as a being but representing, in truth, an abstraction, or more precisely a possession that takes hold of the

[84] See Mary Midgely's Beast and Man: the Roots of Human Nature (1995) in which Jungian theories about the daemon and the beast are discussed in a compelling manner.

body by what Coetzee calls Daemons. Indeed, Tolstoy's reference in "The Kreutzer Sonata" (1890) to sexual rampancy as "the ideal of monkeys" contradicts anthropologist Robert Ardrey's findings that gorillas "take so little interest in their sex that […] he concludes that they are in their decadence" (38). There is clearly a preconception about animal sexuality that is founded on a collective unconscious that is in denial about its own bestiality.

Susan Barton, on the verge of mysticism, is pushed to the edge of her cerebral universe by Friday; she even describes herself as a ghost, nothing but a story in the pen of a writer in contrast to the full embodiment he is given. The absence of speech in Friday makes him an animalistic creature in her view and she thus projects onto him as a writer fills a page ("Friday grows old before his time, like a dog locked up all its life"[55]), and Susan Barton likens him to a dog in a seminal passage:

> I think of a watch-dog, raised with kindness but kept from birth behind a locked gate. When at last such a dog escapes, the gate having been left open, let us say, the world appears so strange, so full of troubling sights and smells, that it snarls at the first creature to approach, and leaps at its throat, after which it is marked down as vicious, and chained to a post for the end of its days. I do not say that you are vicious, Friday; I do not say that you will ever be chained, that is not the import of my story. Rather I wish to point to how unnatural a lot for a dog or any other creature to be kept from its kind; also how the impulse of love, which urges us toward our own kind, perishes during confinement, or loses its way (80/81).

Barton is ironised in her attempts to claim the place of the sovereign subject: in an attempt to rationalise the unstable, unknowable quality of Friday she has no recourse but to view him as "a" dog. This distances her from the aforementioned "biocentric" tradition Attridge attributes to David Lurie, who seeks to find the unique in each animal rather than essentialise the complex in a homogenising manner.

Jacobus Coetzee's appreciation of animals is extremely shallow as he views them as nothing more than merchandise: "We wished to buy fresh oxen" (Dusklands 66), "[w]hat's mine is mine – my cattle, my wagon, my goods (70). The use of lexis (particularly the words "fresh" and "goods") manifests the desire of the consumer. Animals from the Empire's position equal merchandise: the boy in Waiting for the Barbarians that the magistrate interrogates is accused of stealing "sheep and horses" (11). Jacobus Coetzee also treats the Hottentots as if they were animals: "I rode into the cluster of Hottentots at the tailgate flourishing my whip and shouting "Back! Back!" Nimbly they fell back and regrouped with sparkling eyes" (67).

Yet, despite Jacobus Coetzee's conquistador divisive vision, he is also capable of accepting bodily features common to all species with the detached interest of the voyeur's mind: "I have always enjoyed watching coitus, whether of animals or slaves. Nothing human is alien to me" (87). Like Susan Barton, a creature of the Enlightenment, but this time an exploration of its psychosis, Jacobus Coetzee embodies the aggressive patriarchal stance of the hunter: he has no sympathy for animals: "I move through the wilderness with my gun at the shoulder of my eye and slay elephants, hippopotami,

rhinoceroses, buffalo, lions, leopards, dogs, giraffes, antelope and buck of all descriptions, fowl of all descriptions, hare and snakes" (79). This violence is re-enacted in Jacobus Coetzee's massacre of the Hottentots. He associates himself with the beetle, especially when considering its death pangs, an interesting extension of his inner self that hides beneath a dark shell of phantasmagoria. He perceives animals as the other, and the other is that which must be destroyed or captured. It is also the Id, lurking in the lesser-known recesses of the self. Jacobus Coetzee has allowed Mary Midgely's "Beast Within" to surface in his acts.

Dogs

Cerberus and the jackal-God Anubis both connote death in ancient Greek and Egyptian mythologies, a link that is further dramatised in the modern setting of Disgrace. The link with dogs becomes more and more symbolic as Lurie calls himself the "dog-man" and the reader is brought close to the dogs through descriptions of their deaths; "the death of the dog is a kind of outrage visited upon the reader" (Heyns 62). Michiel Heyns makes the connection with Kafka's The Trial, the death of Joseph K being described in canine simile: what it means to die "like a dog".

At one level, characters are thrown into a rudimentary existence that renders them dog-like: Michael K, like Magda, digs a burrow for himself and buries objects. Teresa Dovey notes the same of Life & Times of Michael K when the narrator of part two refers to Michael K as a dog (212): "it refers to the liberal writer's sense of despair at not being

able to terminate the narrative in a way which will be liberating in its transcendence in a situation of suffering and defeat" (Dovey 262). This "situation" of suffering is the topos of the dog-man, the boundary between the embodied and the disembodied soul.

However, the role of dogs in Disgrace is more developed than the limited coverage they receive in novels such as Life & Times of Michael K and Age of Iron, for it is in this novel that the dog is used to develop human characters in what could be described as a type of parallel world in which no claims to knowledge other than the most visceral are expressed fully.

In Waiting for the Barbarians, the prisoners and the magistrate undergo significant humiliation as they approach the zone of the dog-man. "When the prisoners arrive the dogs bark at them" (18), "[f]lies buzz and cloister over the open latrine for the prisoners" (20), "the kitchen staff refuse them utensils and begin to toss them their food from the doorway as if they were indeed animals" (21) "Someone throws a dead cat over the wall during the night and causes an uproar". Later the magistrate himself is described with canine metaphors and similes: "I [...] the filthy creature who for a week licked his food off the flagstones like a dog because he had lost the use of his hands" (136). In an earlier sequence, the imprisoned magistrate states baldly: "I guzzle my food like a dog. A bestial life is turning me into a beast" (87). The canine simile is part of a larger currency: man becomes dog-man, reader and character enter the corporeal zone of the animal ("beast" here is employed to underscore the depravity and abasement inflicted on him). By dispensing with artifacts ("utensils"), the step is taken.

In Disgrace, the novel that develops this theme the most, no significant mention is made of dogs until Lurie arrives at Lucy's farm in chapter seven. This is immediately after his expulsion from Cape Town as a figurative pharmakos, literally "disgraced" in chapter eleven; he undergoes an internal metamorphosis into the dog-man.

Interestingly, Lucy relies on the dogs for protection: "the more dogs the more deterrence". Her dogs, "Dobermans, German Shepherds, ridgebacks, bull terriers, Rottweilers" (61), all watchdogs, stand for the apartheid regime of oppression or any regime for that matter. We are introduced to Katy, a bulldog bitch (62). It is this dog who will later serve as an embodiment of David Lurie's retributive, angered spirit as it attacks Pollux.

The dogs are clearly used as symbols of the old dispensation, especially in the rape scene when they embody the psychology of Lurie and Lucy: just before they meet the rapists they engage in a conversation about dogs:

> 'When you were small [...], the people next door had a dog, a golden retriever [...]. It was a male. Whenever there was a bitch in the vicinity, it would get excited and unmanageable, and with Pavlovian regularity the owners would beat it. They went on until the poor dog didn't know what to do. At the smell of a bitch it would chase around the garden with its ears flat and its tail between its legs, whining, trying to hide' (90).

The argument is auto-suggestive as David Lurie wishes to express his own predicament, the "laws of Eros" that govern his sense of being, at least an important part of it and which are in direct conflict with the constraints of normative clerical behaviour. He goes on to foreshadow the death of Lucy's dogs when in their discussions he empathises with a dog who is forced to live against its instincts, "at the deepest level I think it would have preferred being shot" he tells her. The shooting of the dogs, which comes a few pages later, is particularly brutal (95/96).

Each dog embodies a hope of Lurie's; these are the guardians of the gates of the empire that can no longer protect its forlorn citizens. As it is "the tall man" (95) who destroys the dogs, one could argue that a mirror effect is created: this is Lurie killing his former self.

To consummate the death of his former self, David Lurie voluntarily takes on the job of incinerating the dogs as he consciously acts out penitence. He has grown a shell over his soul and steeled himself to the reality of death. The end of the novel confirms the transformation of character. Like Oedipus who has been blinded, maimed and extradited, David Lurie's oedipal shadow is cast on the dog he befriends towards the last pages of the novel:

> [o]f the dogs in the holding pen, there is one he has come to feel a particular fondness for. It is a young male with a withered left hindquarter which it drags behind it. Whether it was born like that he does not know. No visitor has shown an interest in adopting it [...] he has been careful not to give it a name (though Bev

> Shaw refers to it as *Driepoot*) nevertheless, he is sensible of a generous affection streaming out toward him from the dog. Arbitrarily, unconditionally, he has been adopted; the dog would die for him, he knows (215).

The reason why Lurie does not dare name the dog is that he is looking at his double; his embodied spirit. The dog (we could call it the oedipal dog) is three-legged, suggesting the third riddle of Oedipus before the Sphinx (the creature that goes on three legs in the last stage of life is the human – in this case the maimed dog-man). It is also rejected, like Oedipus and Lurie. The dog's fondness for the music David Lurie likes, an emotional, intuitive corporeal link, brings them closer to each other still, despite his unequivocal abjectness toward it (these could be read as elements of self-hatred and denial he projects onto its physical being): "[s]ometimes, while he is reading or writing, he releases it from the pen and lets it frisk, in its grotesque way, around the yard, or snooze at his feet. [...] When he hums Teresa's lines [...] the dog snaps its lips and seems on the point of singing too or howling". (215). These are the last moments of the embattled self that must annihilate the old self, burn it out or sublimate it, thus the book ends with him 'giving up' the dog. The brilliant pun on 'pen' suggests that the dog-pen is the same as the writer's pen, that the act of creation is an embodiment. Thus a major feature of the treatment of animals in Disgrace is that they are used to embody the two main substantives that drive the plot: sex (whose totem is the snake) and death (the dog).

We will be reminded of Anubis, the Egyptian Jackal-headed god of the underworld. In Disgrace there is "a young dog that looks like a cross between a ridgeback and a jackal

(Disgrace 80) and the camp where Michael K works is called Jakkalsdrift – the place of death.

The dog representing death is not only found in Disgrace. In analysing The Master of Petersburg Attridge writes: "one night Dostoevsky hears, in his sleep, a voice calling him, but when he wakes up fully it turns out to be just the howling of a dog. His response engages movingly with the deconstructive logic (or alogic) of the arrivant" (J.M. 122):

> [a] dog, not his son. Therefore? Therefore he must throw off this lethargy! *Because* it is not his son he must not go back to bed but must get dressed and answer the call. If he expects his son to come as a thief in the night, and listens only for the call of the thief, he will never hear him. As long as he expects what he does not expect, what he does not expect will not come. Therefore – paradox within paradox, darkness swaddled in darkness – he must answer to what he does not expect (The Master 98).

Attridge notes the dog's presence as more than an arbitrary detail: its presence calls into question the relationship Fyodor Mikhailovich has with the unknown:

> [h]ere is the dilemma of the one who waits for the *arrivant*; the one, that is, who wishes to be open to the arrival of the other, the wholly new. […] the *unfamiliar* […]. The cry of the dog, however is not the unexpected in this sense; it is the event that interrupts the order of the familiar and unfamiliar with absolute

> heterogeneity, an appeal from the other which comes from outside any structure of moral obligation (122).

Attridge nods at Derrida, reading the dog as an expression of the idea of anticipation. He goes on to analyse Fyodor Mikhailovich's reaction to the dog: "Dostoevsky leaves the house and eventually finds the dog, chained to a drainpipe, the chain wrapped around one leg. He frees the leg, but leaves the dog tied up, still howling" (123). Relating the idea of aporia, Attridge connects the guilt that Fyodor Mikhailovich feels at leaving the dog to a Kierkegaardian "ethical order". "All this makes the reading uncomfortable, motorless, rudderless. Readers who hook on to the political plot or the sexual plot as the main hope of narrative direction […] find the rewards are meagre" (125).

This study's approach to the chained dog is far more allegorical, for the arrivant, the unfamiliar, the thief in the night, is none other than death itself. Ironically, Attridge quotes from Derrida's The Gift of Death (1995), but does not make the link that, in this study's view, seems manifestly clear. The point is that The Master of Petersburg hinges on the necessity for Fyodor Mikhailovich to come to terms with Pavel's death. He must experience the "Lösung" of David Lurie, to let the dog "into his bed" (The Master 82) if he is to gain any sort of "certainty". The "darkness swallowed in darkness" is a clear poeticisation of death, the dog is Cerberus, howling from the bottomless pit, the same pit he feels in the vortex (with Pavel in it) that draws him into torpor (small death) during sex.

Conclusion

In conclusion, dogs, along with other creatures, signify the corporeal existence of the other, which, in an existentialist sense, precedes his/her essence. Whether the creature represented is a lobster, a canary or a mongrel, Coetzee utilises the animal form to remind us of our own bodies.

Although he dramatises more than one discourse on animals (hence leaving open the question of animal intelligence), the stronger current in the fiction is that of the body of the animal and how this body sheds light on what it means to be a sentient creature. Whether this idea is achieved through discursive means (in the voices of different characters), illustration (in particular through inverted fable) or suggestion (the analogy with the dog), we are above all in a zone where the boundaries between the humanoid and the animal are diffused through the common yet defamiliarising medium of the body's internal laws: "[i]f she believes in the ram, then does she believe in its blood too, this sacred liquid, sticky, dark, almost black, pumped out in gouts on to soil where nothing will grow? […] For that, finally, is all it means to be alive: to be able to die" (Elizabeth Costello 211).

Chapter Eight: Eating

When Anaxagoras (circa 500 - 428 BC) said that you are what you eat, he was referring to the idea of commonality between the eater and the eaten more than any supra-natural effect attained by eating itself. This does not mean that we become pumpkins upon eating pumpkins, but rather that the elements of the pumpkin, when stripped down to their lowest common denominator, are the same atoms that we as humans possess. Beyond this, our understanding of the pumpkin, our belief of what it is and of what it exists, is given a powerful empirical response in the taste, chemical reactions and intestinal ingestion that the food inspires in our biological system: the elements of its being eaten are translated into features by which we live and perceive. In this respect, eating is being. Coetzee's writings consider eating in this light, establishing a style that does not take eating and food for granted or veil it with customs, but exposes it as an extension of the symbolic potentiality of the soma: the metabolism.

Eating is a fundamental assertion of life, it dominates much of our time, and in all societies it is the backbone of a way of being. A vital mode of the "simple standard erected [of] the body" (Doubling 248) in Coetzee's fiction, it affects characters and plot in the writings to a considerable degree. Food, on the other hand, centred on the sanctified part of the body has often taken on an important structural quality in literature: meals are social articulations, forced rendezvous that allow for development of plot – the tendency is to extrapolate away from the potentially graphic palato-guttural experience of eating and to focus on victuals as separate symbolic objects that accompany the themes.

Hence Macbeth drinks to the health of Banquo, whom he has had slain, from a chalice when he himself had spoken of a poisoned chalice, as a metaphorical representation of his ethical and political crisis; Rabelais' Gargantua eats as the populace of the Middle Ages were seen to have lived in the eyes of the author; the food described in Flaubert's Madame Bovary acts as a mirror of the tenuous relationship between Charles and Emma Bovary. These are few examples out of many.

It stands to reason that food is intrinsically significant in literature and Art as it is in human life as sustenance. Food is given powers that exemplify features of life such as poisons that symbolise and create death and potions that enhance natural features and influence behavioural patterns: aphrodisiacs, love potions, opiates, stimulants and depressants chart the different chemical modes that our bodies live through. The sacred importance of food and the idea of food representing life are transcribed in Christ's transubstantiation. The wine and bread that are ingested are endowed with a symbolic power that somehow imprints itself on the victuals and hence enters the body literally, to cure it of evil. Other religions around the world, such as Judaism, Islam, Hinduism and Jainism, decree specific dietary injunctions, underlining the importance of eating for the body and the soul as well as food in society.

Thus food and eating cannot be dissociated from the traditional symbolism attached to them in literary and religious archetypes. As important extensions of the body they remain ethical issues that continue to influence the collective unconscious:

> Rozin has shown that we [Westerners] have voodoo like intuitions ourselves. Most Americans won't touch a sterilized cockroach, or even a plastic one, and won't drink juice that the roach has touched for even a fraction of a second. And even Ivy League students believe that you are what you eat. They judge that a tribe that hunts turtles for their meat and wild boar for their bristles will be good swimmers (Pinker 230/231).

Steven Pinker's argument is founded in science, but it recognises that the belief of transfer from food to eater is rooted in myth and history: the relationship the eater has with food goes beyond the rational into the intuitive belief that eating (and what is eaten) defines what the body is.

The purposes of this chapter are to show how a number of Coetzee's novels use the themes of eating and food to develop his poetics of the defamiliarising body. Eating is a symbolic action that sheds lights on characterisation, especially in Life & Times of Michael K, where eating habits and starvation suggest Michael K's inner battle to escape society and in The Lives of Animals, where vegetarianism as a moral position is dramatised.

The Symbolism of Eating and Food

Eating and food are used to mirror plot and characterisation in the majority of Coetzee's novels. In more than one work, aspects of sexuality are evoked through eating. The barbarian girl the magistrate finds in Waiting for the Barbarians devours the bean stew he serves her in a manner he does not ignore: "I watch her eat. She eats like a blind person, gazing into the distance, working by touch. She has a good appetite, the appetite of a robust young countrywoman" (Waiting 31). The reader senses the sexual connotations with 'appetite' and 'touch' that the focaliser –the magistrate –brings to the description. Later we are told that she "eats too fast", belches and comments on beans and farting. In her crudeness she has a poetic genuineness that is brought out primarily because of the way she goes about the ritual of eating.

In Boyhood, the ambiguous character of Mr Gouws, John's class teacher, is symbolised by the scones he offers him: "[h]e grows flustered and stiff. Mr. Gouws offers him a second scone, which he refuses. 'Come on!' says Mr. Gouws, and smiles, and puts it on his plate anyway […]. The second scone sits on the plate uneaten. He will pretend no more; he grows mute and stubborn" (Boyhood 133). Because the scone is something that can be eaten, something that will enter the inside, it becomes imbued with slightly hidden sexual overtones. The second scone is like the "something else stupid" (133) Mr. Gouws does not try to do, apart from not making him shake hands when he brings the boy to his gate. John's body is his property, and he seems firmly aware of this; he knows intuitively

that by accepting the second scone he could be sending out a message he does not mean, so he leaves it.

In The Master of Petersburg Fyodor Mikhailovich's sexual urges are paced at the intervals of his meals. When he first meets Anna Sergeyevna and her daughter, their characters are described in sufferance. This is when Fyodor Mikhailovich is "not hungry" (The Master 5). When Sergeyevna does bring him food – soup and potatoes with salt and butter – he tells himself that "he would like to see her naked" (13). In chapter four the child knocks at his door and asks him if he would "like to eat now?" which he declines. Later that evening she brings him tea and as she watches him drinking it he begins to regress into a disturbing rapture that overcomes him: "he is struck by the fine line of her temple and cheekbone, the dark, liquid eyes, the dark brows, the hair blonde as corn. There is a rush of feeling in him" (23). The lexis (hair described as corn) shows how Fyodor Mikhailovich's subconscious is drawn to the association of eating and copulation. He is fighting to escape the morbid net that is drawing him into the vacant shell of his dead stepson.

The sexual gesture, like the gastronomical one, is an affirmation of life. On the point of the analogy between eating and sex, Benjamin Kunkel, in a review of The Lives of Animals argues that "Carol Adams's [suggestion] that we abstract meat from animals is in a way analogous to our abstraction of sex from women" (Kunkel "Eat" 2). Since, as chapter six of this study has shown, many of the male protagonists respond to sexual urges unconsciously and spontaneously, it could be argued that eating (not only meat) as

a manifestation of the will to live is also largely subconscious, hinging on an "abstraction". However, Michael K and Elizabeth Costello, it will be shown, cannot sustain this abstraction and choose rather to follow through the drama of eating (in these cases, specifically meat) with full consciousness.

Eating does not only connote the sexual body; it is also used to evoke pertinent ethical questions. In Waiting for the Barbarians the magistrate wonders how the henchman can eat with a clear conscience, drawing effect from the spiritual signification of eating:

> [d]o you find it easy to take food afterwards? I have imagined that one would want to wash one's hands. But no ordinary washing would be enough, one would require priestly intervention, a ceremonial of cleansing, don't you think? Some kind of purging of one's soul too—that is how I have imagined it. Otherwise how would it be possible to return to everyday life—to sit down at table, for instance, and break bread with one's family or one's comrades? (Waiting 126).

In this instance, as in Michael K's story and in the voice of Elizabeth Costello, eating carries connotations of the sacred as an archetypal ritual of libation: it cannot be dissociated from life as a mere necessity of the body and stands at the centre of ethical values.

Coetzee's autobiographical fiction Youth guides us through John's developments as he enters London society and deconstructs the stereotypes that plague him. Food is a motif

that allows for the reader to apprehend John's spiritual dilemma: should he enter mainstream society and focus on security – symbolised by the meaty corporate meals he evokes; or should John take the harder route of the artist, characterised by the diet "Rousseau would approve of" (Youth 3)?

Towards the end of the novel, he befriends an Indian co-worker, Ganapathy (the Hindu god of prosperity). In inverse symbolism to his name, Ganapathy is literally starving himself, his apartment rife with the stench of rubbish bins he has not taken out. John is confronted with his spiritual doppelganger, for even though the rotten banana peels repel him, he too cannot survive in the professional world and is 'decomposing'. However, as he is in denial, he tries to help Ganapathy, to restore him to the level of decency, and so he buys him "bread […], cold meats, frozen green peas" (147). Ganapathy expresses no interest in them, but appears to have eaten them as he appears at work the next day seemingly sated. Furthermore, he ignores the service John has made him, this point in particular angering the young thinker who erupts in a torrent of questions concerning food and culture:

> [i]s there something about the whole business that he has failed to understand, something Indian? Does Ganapathy belong to a caste to which it is taboo to eat at the table of a Westerner? […] Does the notional meal (cold meats and frozen peas with butter) that they would have eaten together have the same value, in the transaction between himself and Ganapathy as before? (148).

In this example we see how the sharing of food with its subtle connotations of charity (a theme developed in Life & Times of Michael K) turns out to be a significant failure for John. The assumption he makes in the light of this failure is that food as well as the practices around food, eating and the treatment of animals all represent culture and issues concerning the meeting of cultures. It is interesting that it is food that triggers off these thoughts. The body cannot be removed from what it eats, hence the philosophical conflict between Elizabeth Costello and her daughter-in-law, Norma, are centred on the different eating habits they have.

In Foe, the narrator uses food to suggest space, plot and character. "Within the fence, protected from the apes, grew a patch of wild bitter lettuce. This lettuce, with fish and birds' eggs, formed our sole diet on the island" (Foe 9). The bitter lettuce represents the island, a bleak place with little hospitality, "dotted with drab bushes that never flowered" (7). Crusoe has a "great head of (…) hair" (18) and "a beard that was never cut". Like the wild lettuce he is dissociated from the 'drabness' and sterility of the island by his life-force, epitomised in his hair (symbolising potency) and, by extrapolation, mirrored in the lettuce's leafiness.[85] He is bitter in more than ways than one (cynical about history and the prospect of escape, physically weather-beaten). Although, like the protein in the eggs, he offers a vital life-line to Susan Barton, it is temporary, and just as the bushes "never flower[ed]"', the eggs are aborted births, foreshadowing the stuntedness of their relationship (Crusoe, who is a distant lover, dies on the ship that 'saves' them). This is later echoed by the dead baby Susan Barton finds in England (105).

[85] David Lurie also has flowing hair, conversely to Cruso's case, a dramatisation of his fondness for luxuriance.

On the island genteel eighteenth century rituals cannot be sustained. “Indeed, it was no pretty sight to see him take his food in his unwashed hands and gnaw at it on the left side, where it hurt him less” (19). Although the unromanticised truths of the island do not inspire rapture, the island offers a frugal survival for its inhabitants. In England, it is only Foe’s overgrown garden that prevents Friday and Susan Barton from starving: ironically, it is in the metropolis where the issue of eating becomes most central. Through the eating motif Coetzee inverts stereotypes of place.

If eating plays an important role in many of Coetzee’s novels, it is crucial in Life & Times of Michael K, where it slowly surfaces from K’s subconscious to the conscious stratum, takes him over to the point of directing the plot and eventually leaving the telling to a medical authority. “K’s relation to the earth and to cultivation […] implies a resistance to modernity’s drive to exploit natural resources” (Attridge J.M. 53). As a body, K responds to the most elementary of needs (sustenance) with self-restriction while the mind grows in what Attridge calls “luxuriance” (55).

Michael K’s metabolism is described in a physiological language that the reader can feel in a distinctly corporeal manner: “[h]is bowels ran and there were moments of giddiness when he stood up. Sometimes his stomach felt like a tight fist clenched in the centre of his body” (117).

Yet Michael K's eating retains a symbolic function: his meals mirror his psychical development. His steady starving of himself, not unlike his celibacy, signifies a trajectory that moves further and further away from the grips of society. Michael K starts the novel as an omnivore: he devours a meat pie someone gives him as an act of charity and is moved by the act, even brought to tears: "K went to the bakery and brought back two hot chicken pies. He sat besides his friend on the bench and ate. The pie was so delicious that tears came to his eyes" (30). Later he feels "weaker than before, but not sick. He [eats] once a day, buying doughnuts or pies with money from his mother's purse" (34). Following Buddhist philosophy, K is still trapped in the cycle of suffering and terrestrial rebirth. The doughnut, often circular, could be read as a symbol for the eternal rebirth into the world he must endure.

The meat pie he eats symbolises this attachment, for just as it is an act of charity so does Michael K sacrifice himself for his mother to the best of his ability until her death. The pie causes strong emotions in him, just as the mother's death becomes a driving force in his exodus from the polis to the farm. Although the farm, metonym of the maternal imagination Michael K looks back on as a type of golden country, is a place of providence and fertility for a brief period, allowing him to plant his crops and explore the earth, it belongs to someone else and becomes a portal into civilisation through the symbolism of the victuals he finds in the farmhouse pantry. He finds and eats apricot preserve that makes him retch (54) and takes a perverse pleasure in being sick. The

preserve, a condiment from another time, foreshadows the arrival of Visagie – a metonym for society.

Visagie himself is (like the apricot preserve); protected from the environment, part of an older world, too much so for Michael K's bitter palate. Visagie is an embodiment of the colonial class. This is developed primarily through his eating habits. He is constantly hungry and scavenges K's broiled bush doves, eating like a "hungry boy", pushing K into the role of servant and cook. Michael K's desire to vomit in response to the preserve foregrounds his rejection of Visagie. Visagie represents normative societal values; he is a meat-eater, attempting to affect K with his narratives about Karoo lamb while exploiting Michael K as a human resource. Visagie wishes to convert Michael K to his normative vision of the world: "I could give you figures that would shock you" (64) he says and then asks "[d]on't you ever go to the shop?". Because of Visagie, he must "abandon [his] children" (63), the pumpkins and leave the farm. He puts the money Visagie gives him to buy supplies at the shop in an old tin he finds by the roadside (65). He buries it under a stone. The box of his mother's ashes, the cans of beans, the tinned preserve, all comestible boxes of the city, are symbolically and literally discarded.

Later in the novel, after days of hiding, Michael K ventures into the farmhouse again; he realizes that it is inhabited upon discovering "six newly shined unlabelled corned-beef cans" (107). The cans, like the tins and the box, a recurring motif, foreshadow the arrival of society once again, this time that of the "men from the mountains" (108). Michael K is

attracted to the rebels and thinks of joining them, but the difference between them seems too great, they are still part of society, exemplified by their eating habits.

This is emphasised through the brutal destruction of his crops by the rebels, whose donkeys trample and crop his vines while the men eat roasted meat and bathe in the dam. Michael K's dream of rearing his "children" – his crop - it seems cannot be fulfilled, even in the remotest corner of the earth. By this stage the farmhouse has not only become a signifier of society, but a place of death: "[h]e avoided the farmhouse as a place of the dead" (103); in the pantry there are stinking "bones held together by a dry grey parchment, green-bellied flies still buzzed around it" (98).

Although Michael K attempts to escape the farm, he is soon back in the tight grip of society and its specific food. The Prince Albert police give him porridge, as he received in the work camp, but "even before the first spoonful had reached his mouth, had begun his retching" (70). The porridge, food of the menial labourer, like the preserve, metonym of the wealthy classes, disgusts Michael K. He has to get over an initial period of retching before he can eat the food of the polis.

In Jakkalsdrift, the camp where Michael K is transferred, he is given "baby cereal" (71) as he is regressing once again, reverting to what he calls the 'old stupidity'. In the camp, food takes on the symbolism of freedom or lack thereof: the workers hide "caches of wine" (93) eat sausage and beer till the formidable Oosthuizen pours the wine into the earth and confiscates all illicit objects. " 'They are going to starve us'" said Robert" (94)

after an act of arson is perpetrated and Oosthuizen's wrath is upon them. Eating in the camp is not a right but a privilege, controlled by the authorities.

Hence the novel uses processed or "artificial" food to develop themes of charity and control of the body in society. These are issues that Michael K endeavours to escape first through a natural diet and, ultimately, and more radically, through starvation.

In order to escape society, Michael K tries to live like an animal; he eats "worm-eaten fruit […] his belly bloated with raw food, taking care to take bites of good flesh here and there, chewing as quickly as a rabbit" (39). The fruit that Michael K eats is symbolic of his entry into nature, his cutting-off from the group as he attempts to live "off the land" (46). However, the body must eat more substantially, and this dilemma drives Michael K into resigning himself to the fact that "these snorting long-haired beasts [the ewes on the farm], or creatures like them, would have to be caught, killed, cut up and eaten if he hoped to live" (52). He pursues the ewes until he is "famished and exhausted" (53). Finally, he traps one:

> [h]e could feel the goat's hindquarters heaving beneath him; it bleated again and again in terror; its body jerked in spasms. K straddled it, clenched his hands around its neck, and bore down with all his strength, pressing the head under the surface of the water and into the thick ooze below. The hind-quarters thrashed, but the knees were gripping the body like a vice […] [l]ong after the last snort and tremor he continued (54).

Michael K becomes a killer in this rite of passage; this is expressed in the bare lexical predilection that is characteristically corporeal: “head”, “body”, “spasms” and “neck”. The killing of the ewe is made horrific by the reminder that a body is a body, and to kill a body with one’s own hands is no light affair. The next day he goes about cleaning and cooking the creature; by now it has become a “corpse” with yellow eyes and bared teeth, “the organs came tumbling out at his feet, blue and purple and pink” (55). The mercilessness of the tone and atmosphere places the reader in a zone of moral consciousness where normative assumptions of hunting and eating are deconstructed. Through endoscope the interior is viewed here to highlight the kill; in these pages Coetzee forces the reader to contend with the garish hidden face of meat-eating.

The traumatic enterprise takes its toll on Michael K’s body and because of it he becomes delirious with fever. When he recovers, he feels the urge to leave the farm house, to head back into nature, onto the land of the farm since the meat in the pantry is “stinking”. He makes a catapult and decides to hunt smaller prey, namely birds. The initiation of this new self is born out of the thorough disgust he expresses at the acts of killing, disembowelling and cooking the ewe.

Michael K sets about a new life that comprises of living “by the rising and setting of the sun, in a pocket outside time” (60). Although K is taken off his path by society and human encounters, he progresses in his movement towards an animalistic state through a natural diet. The passing of time is slowed down to relate this eating habit. “He returned

to eating insects. Since time was poured out upon him in such an endless stream, there were whole mornings he could spend lying on his belly over an ant-nest picking out the larvae one by one with a grass stalk and putting them into his mouth"(102). K eats roots and binds with the earth. He inhabits the mountains finally, becoming a hunter-gatherer, eating lizards, grubs, plants, and flowers. He moves towards starvation, he becomes lighter and lighter, often drifting into benign torpors and philosophical reveries (67). Like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, Michael K retreats into the mountains, away from the miasma of the city, emblematised by the can or tin of industrialised food, as he reverts to his purer ontology, almost that of an animal.

If the direction of the symbolism is romantic, the tone and mood of the passages dealing with diet are more pragmatic: Michael K struggles to live out the ascetic life he is attempting, "trying to live off the veld but for the main part going hungry" (49), his diet becomes less and less human, something his metabolism struggles to sustain: "[h]e ate handfuls of flowers and his stomach hurt" (68).

In a rare opportunity of completion and happiness, Michael K is allowed to eat one of the pumpkins. "Then came the evening when the first pumpkin was ripe enough to cut. It had grown earlier and faster than the others, in the very centre of the field; K marked it out as the first fruit, the firstborn. The shell was soft, the knife sank in without a struggle" (113). The experience is an ambrosial one: "[b]eneath the crisply charred skin the flesh was soft and juicy. He chewed with tears of joy in his eyes" (113). His eating of the flesh of the pumpkins retains the ancient mythological idea of ritualistic cannibalism whereby a part

of the character's being is transmitted to the eater. The narrative, so tightly focused on K's consciousness, personifies the melons and pumpkins he nurtures. "He ate these two children on successive days, praying that they would make him well" (118). Michael K, by referring to the crop as a "newborn" who gives in "without a struggle" and employing words such as "skin" and "flesh" in detailing it, breaks the cycle of rebirth by ingesting the legacy of his mother and her cousins, for he wants no real children; he could not be a good father he says. So it is that Michael K lives out a mystic unity with the past and with himself. In the open land of the Karoo he is the god of time, Cronos, eating his children so that he can remain in his pocket.

However, this largely poetic image of eating-of-the-self cannot sustain itself. The eating of his "children" is not enough to keep him alive; it is an unnaturally idealistic gesture. After this meal Michael K sleeps more and more, allowing buck to feast on his ripe crop. He begins to hibernate and, in a symbolic and literal sense, through starvation, begins to die (118).

Before it is "interrupted" by the medical officer of part two, the starvation, like the animal diet, is experienced positively. On escaping the camp, as day breaks, without any food in his stomach that the reader knows of, Michael K experiences a lyrical epiphany: "[t]he dry white grass waved in the wind; the sky was blue; his body was overflowing with vigour. Walking in great loops, he skirted one farmhouse, then another" (97).

Enthralled by his freedom, running on empty, Michael K enters into a type of mythopoeia: “his was the first foot”. In his rapture he thinks of “living on air in the mountains” again. He returns to the Visagie farm and finds the pump still working. He cannot “get enough of the water” (99). This ingestion is a symbolic one, for the water that gives birth to Michael K’s “children” through his mother’s ashes, is also a metonym of the pure natural world. The mythopoeic potential of the plot and onomastics is developed in the poetic descriptions of the water pump, giver of the elixir vitae, the water of life: “[h]e stood leaning against the frame of the pump, feeling the tremor that passed through it each time the piston reached the bottom of its stroke, hearing the great wheel above his head cut through the dark on its greased bearings”.

Carried forward by his inspiration, he builds a shelter without eating:

> “[w]hen dusk fell he realized with surprise that he had spent a second day without eating [...] his own need for food grew slighter and slighter. Hunger was a sensation he did not feel and barely remembered. If he ate, eating what he could find, it was because he had not yet shaken off the belief that bodies that do not eat die. What food he ate meant nothing to him. It had no taste, or tasted like dust (100/101).

The imagery (particularly of dust) confirms Michael K’s liebestod: his shelter is a grave, “leaving himself only an irregular slit through which to wriggle” (100). He accustoms himself to this new lunar existence. “Gradually he lost all fear of the night” (103). Since

he has been in Jakkalsdrift, the lair of the Jackal, associate of Anubis, the ancient Egyptian god who weighed the souls of the dead with a feather at the gates of the afterlife, he is now on the other side of life.

Part two recounts Michael K as a patient on a drip from the perspective of a medical officer. The reader learns of the toll Michael K's eating habits have had on his body. "There is every evidence of prolonged malnutrition: cracks in his skin, sores on his hands and feet, bleeding gums. His joints protrude, he weighs less than forty kilos" (129). The narrator probes Michael K's contradictory situation, asking him why he did not eat if he had a garden, to which Michael K responds that he was in his "sleep" (131) and that he was interrupted. The reader understands that Michael K's starving is not to be allowed by the charitable forces of society: he will not be left to die.

At first, Michael K's refusal to cooperate and his refusal to eat (147) are not fully consummated signs of a death wish yet, for he still drinks water and appears determined to survive on as little as possible. However, a few pages later the medical officer and his helper Noel are faced with the prospect of force-feeding him, despite "a chance he might change his mind" (153).

Finally, once Michael K has escaped, the narrator expands on food and eating. He sees Michael K's body, rather than his will, as having taken the decision no longer to eat. This signifies an interesting development from the strong will exercised in the earlier parts of the novel to build a cart, leave Cape town and tend the farm; a psychosomatic process has

begun in which Michael K's mind is no longer a dominant force, but rather a part of the body, subject to its laws as is the magistrate's in Waiting for the Barbarians. By refusing his body food, Michael K is strengthening his mind's hold on reality. The metaphor of the garden is pertinent in this respect in that it takes into account the necessity for each individual to escape the outside world and concentrate on the interior. "All along, dying Michael K has been growing. It began when he fertilized the earth with the burden of his mother's ashes; that, hidden to him, was his real reason to be" (Gordimer 143).

Michael K's escape and final moments of clarity of the novel only magnify the importance of eating through his symbolic deflowering at the hands of alcohol. The image he has of a teaspoon connects with the teaspoon his mother fed him with when he was a baby, because of the cleft palate, because of the body. The image is one of unsustainability, a hopelessly idealistic account of the future, a last rapture.

Elizabeth Costello's Ethics of Eating

Eating is something that holds a special kind of significance as a symbolic action, since what we eat becomes part of us; hence it is appropriate that the mise en abîme Coetzee uses to collapse time and space (by giving a story of someone giving a lecture rather than simply giving a lecture and hence incorporating an audience), the layers of narrative that transcend fiction, are digested successively, creating a residual debate in the reader's mind about the question. The reader is rarely shown the horror of dead meat in The Lives of Animals; on the whole the novel is not a visceral affair as are other of the works.

Rather than showing, Coetzee turns to telling as Elizabeth Costello presents animals from the perspective of poets and philosophers.

Cora Diamond objects to the argument that Costello's plea is merely an "ethical" one (Attridge J.M. 198). Attridge goes on: "it is not enough to say that Coetzee is trying out positions and arguments as a kind of intellectual experiment, taking them to an extreme he could not himself endorse" (199). Indeed, the question should be considered from the perspective of the body and mind rather than from that of the mind alone. "She [Elizabeth Costello] is also at a stage when the demands of the body, also easy to ignore in the healthfulness of youth, complicate the activities of the writer; when the inseparability of mental processes from physical desire and revulsion becomes unmistakable" (200).

The first part of The Lives of Animals, "The Philosophers and the Animals", treats the issues of vegetarianism and meat-eating, not so much in the lecture as in the parameters of the lecture, the prelude and epilogue as it were, dramatised through the antagonistic relationship between Norma, Elizabeth Costello's daughter-in-law, and Elizabeth. John, the son, is balanced precariously between them, a potentially positive embodiment of a stability between both points of view, but ultimately a hollow shell through which the ambient aggression resonates until it peters out into a stalemate. John is a "crucial focalizing presence" (Attridge J.M. 194) as his approach to his mother gives the reader the imagery necessary to visualise (and embody) Elizabeth Costello. His defamiliarising emphasis on the corporeal alienates her from other characters in the novel who escape

physical description: "he is shocked at how she has aged" (The Lives 15); she is described as "flabby" and "fleshy" (16).

Culturally, Elizabeth Costello is closer to the Eastern doctrine of *ahimsa* [86]"which advocates non-injury to all living things and reverence for all life […]. Jains and Buddhists emphasise the interconnectedness of all living things, recommending vegetarianism, and oppose traditional practices of animal sacrifice" (DeGracia 6). Because of this, Elizabeth Costello is an outsider among her associates and family. Her unequivocal criticism of the inhumane industrialisation of the slaughtering of animals and meat-eating in general is met with sarcasm and bemusement.

When asked why she does not eat meat, Elizabeth Costello claims to wish to "save her soul" by not eating meat, causing an unease in her midst by this muted accusation and alienating her from the consensus, which is traditional and meat-eating. By evoking the soul, that ancient symbol of the ineffable medium between mind and body, Elizabeth Costello is orientating her arguments away from the fields of the cognitive sciences into religion, anthropology, art and philosophy. Her references to cultural alternatives such as Gandhi are rebuffed by her company, who remain rooted in a Western teleology.

Costello founds her eating on a critique of reason. She sees the faculty of reason as an abstraction used to perpetrate unspeakable acts against animals. It is assumed that animals have no souls, are mere Newtonian mechanisms ("automata") that can be

[86] The Sanskrit word (ahimsa) has its root more specifically in the idea of non violence ("*a* without + *himsa* injury" (Collins Concise Dictionary 27).

converted into protein. In this fictional character Coetzee enounces the position taken tacitly in other novels, particularly Youth and Life & Times of Michael K, where meat-eating is associated with a regress into a positivist society, from the mountains into the grid-iron pattern of streets and buildings; or from Homeric soup in the Cape of Good Hope to corporate lunches with grey trousers and heavy buffets. In these two novels we see how eating can influence a person's character and represent his or her relationship with the world around them.

What Life & Times of Michael K and The Lives of Animals have in common is a protagonist who is drawn to vegetarianism out of a sense of horror for the manner in which animals are killed and eaten. This decision drives the personages to the outer limits of societies (in terms of social status, we see can see Michael K and Costello as representing either extreme of the spectrum) and, eventually, to death. Vegetarianism is not romanticised in any way; it is suggested through the dissuasive tone used to describe meat eating, in a negative, litotic system of representation. Costello's reference to Plutarch, who describes eating meat as chewing "the corpse of a dead animal […] swallow[ing] the juices of death wounds" (38), illustrates this method.

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Since the question of the lives of animals is locked in the flesh of the characters that enunciate it, embodied and personified in their own failing soma, the discursive treatment of animals from a rationalist understanding is undermined. As readers our approach to the issue becomes forcibly intertwined with the inner lives of its proponents; we approach the subject matter, invariably, with the biases of the focalisers. As Michael K's body is

slowly starving and Elizabeth Costello's is dying, their messages become ones we sympathise with corporeally, rather than understand argumentatively. A sense of pathos is created that adds an important dimension to their plea.

Beyond this, the characters are construed to be deliberately frustrating, stubborn and flawed in other respects to give them the human dimension they need to make their message one of the viscera rather than only the mind. Because the ewe Michael K kills is described with such relentless corporeality, and because Elizabeth Costello's discourse on eating refuses to escape the immediate moral implications of animal treatment, the reader is persuaded to see animals as sentient creatures that possess qualities outside of the parameters of reason; as is the case in other instances, the writing transcends the 'genre' of the novel that limits it and enters the physical makeup of the reader through real questions that affect the meta-text: life outside of the pages.

Conclusion

The physical aspect of the body conventionally limited to symbolic representation is given new ground in the Coetzee opus through its less commonly exploited channels, such as pain, disease, the organs and bodily fluids. What this means is that aspects hitherto silenced in corporeal expression are brought to light in the fictional writings. This treatment of the soma can be considered postmodernist and deconstructive in that it etches out the unspoken: Derrida's arrivant. Eating is an important part of this expressionism, especially in The Lives of Animals and Life & Times of Michael K.

The food motif is used to complement character and to underscore the importance of the body. The cycles of eating and starvation can be read using an Indian codex since Michael K's descent into starvation is a spiritual one. Like Gautam, the Buddha, Michael K renounces earthly cycles (the dharma) and his soul (atman) to gain a type of Nirvana through the samasara of life's path. The moksha, or beinglessness, is the end of the cycle, symbolised by the platonic eternity of the last image Michael K leaves us with: a situation of impossible economy, reaching water from the bowels of the earth with a teaspoon that would be enough to survive on. It is a dream that lingers outside of the fiction in the reader's reception as it is the last page of the novel: an imprint. Like all existential heroes, Michael K can only be free once he accepts his own mortality, and to do this he must renounce desire, the desire to eat being the most fundamental and irrevocable.

To focus on food and eating so as to bring up deeper questions about ontology is not something that can be achieved without evoking a sense of unease and strangeness in the reader. Coetzee's work, particularly Life & Times of Michael K, Youth and The Lives of Animals, engages the reader in situations that cause him/her to reflect upon eating and food production in a manner outside of the traditional parameters of reason (although this idea in itself is fraught with problems since the outside of reason is determined by reason itself). The defamiliarising element, a central feature of Coetzee's representation of the body, is sustained when dealing with this question in that the slaughter of animals is not taken for granted, nor is it exempted from the reader. Just as the author re-orders and re-

categorises hierarchies, the question of meat-eating is given renewed significance in Coetzee's world.

Chapter Nine: Death

Through Fyodor Mikhailovich's deathly orgasms the end draws him with absolute power. Michael K, Eugene Dawn, Jacobus Coetzee and Magda are all touched by death; they all kill, while Elizabeth Costello and Elizabeth Curren are both dying themselves. At the broadest level, the protagonists accept life as a body and must therefore come to terms with the body's laws, the most fundamental of these being that mankind is mortal.

An overall philosophy of morbid eroticism and the Freudian death-wish of Thanatos would appear, at first glance, to be the solution Coetzee offers to his protagonists' dilemmas. On closer inspection, however, we see that the way death is treated is more complex. A belief in Pythagorean metempsychosis is revealed in some texts (Age of Iron); a soulless extinguishing of life as a means of expiation in others (Disgrace). The motif of the dog licking the human face repeated emphatically in the texts reinforces inklings of the afterlife, reincarnation and the body, while points of spleen and cynicism reflect the opposite. Indeed, it is challenging to see how the enmity described earlier in this piece sustains itself right up to the death itself. It could well be that Coetzee is challenging the reader by not offering a solution, but continuing the middle ground of polyvalence and contingency. In the face of supreme doubt and the unknown (death), the paradigm appears more relevant than ever.

This chapter will explore how the death of the body influences the ending of many of the novels and show through dying various structures of division leave a cleavage which

foregrounds the topos of the soul. Disease, as Elizabeth Curren puts it, becomes a "weaning" of the soul from the body. The chapter's emphasis is on the area between body and mind where this ironic "weaning" takes place. A contingency, characterised by uncertainty, becomes the zone between body and mind, a place where the Coetzeean soul emerges as it escapes the body.

The Inconclusive Ending

In the metaphysical Judeo-Christian morphology, a Messianic structure causes a systematically climactic end: the return of God on Judgement day, an astonishing culmination of symbols and meaning. The traditional novel in its story telling capacity follows this design in a transposed manner: works tend to end with an apogee, a conclusion that sheds some light on the entire reading experience. Hence a linear perspective builds up to a powerful end and creates this anticipation in the reader.

Coetzee, on the other hand, is renowned for his aborted endings; the reader is continually left in the middle of things: a seemingly arbitrary sentence or thought, an image that appears to represent something new, leaves us stranded. Dovey, in discussing Peter Brooks, explains how the treatment of the death of the body in literature coincides with a plot structure that entails the breaking down of narrative rather than any sense of completion: "Brooks reads Freud's formulation of the death instinct, founded in the notion of repetition, as a metaphor of the way in which repetitions of narrative constitute

'the cure which prolongs narrative', always threatened as it is by breakdown, 'on the verge of premature discharge, of short-circuit'"(Dovey 33).

One often turns the last page of a Coetzee novel with a feeling of emptiness, as if the grand finale was yet again removed at the last minute. One only needs to reflect on the endings of Life & Times of Michael K, Disgrace and Foe to see this pattern. If we are in a system, then it is an open one, a path that runs from "nowhere to nowhere": rarely are we given the satisfaction of ending on a conclusive note. However, there are always significant passages close to the end, death throes. The end of the Coetzee novel, like a body's death, is painful and unglamorous, a question, a physical impossibility. To claim that the end of his novels is like a physical death would be exaggeration, but far less so to say that the trajectory of the body through time is reflected in the text.

Dovey contrasts Coetzee's mode of time, marked by the death of the body, with the "illusion of continuity" created through allegory: "De Man's view of irony locates it within what Coetzee calls the eschatological awareness of time, while allegory engenders a narrative duration which approximates the historical awareness of time, but always only produces an 'illusion of continuity'" (Dovey 41). Indeed, by dramatising the death of the body in his fiction, Coetzee moves away from the symbolic structure of allegory. Elizabeth Curren's dream is an example:

> [i]t is a vision from last night's dream time but also from outside time. Forever the goddess is passing, forever, caught in a posture of surprise and regret, I do not

> follow. Though I peer and peer into the vortex from which visions come, the wake of the goddess and her god-children remains empty, the woman who should follow behind not there, the woman with serpents of flame in her hair who beats her arms and cries and dances.
>
> I related the dream to Vercueil.
>
> "Is it real" he asked.
>
> "Real? Of course not. It isn't even authentic. Florence has nothing to do with Greece. Figures in dreams have another kind of import. They are signs, signs of other things" (Age of Iron 178-9).

Vercueil relates to the 'real', physical world while Elizabeth Curren, whose letter is a poetics of the soul leaving the body, relates to the metaphysical. She expresses the paradox of her own death, which she can see coming, but cannot see herself going through. She is careful to stress that the vision has nothing to do with the real, but at a deeper level of irony, it is merely a subconscious reaction to her own dying body and has everything to do with the real (the *signification* of the real, to be more precise). The ethereal, fluttery, papery world of Elizabeth Curren the moth is contrasted with the embodied, olfactory presence of Vercueil.

Away from the illusory time of allegory we find a type of biocentric time, characterised by closure, by the imminence of death. The plot invariably grows from the sweet to the bitter with, at the centre (either narrated or homo-diegetic), a suffering body, be it represented as the magistrate's hanging from a tree, David Lurie's burnt scalp, Michael

K's hair lip, Friday's tongue. The swan song of the body is treated in a purple passage near the end of the text, often in the form of a dream or some hyper-realistic and deeply physical experience.

Derek Attridge analyses the end of Age of Iron through what he sees as Coetzee's "climactic use of the angel motif" (102), but he goes on to admit in a footnote that

> [t]he ending has been read as a wholly positive conclusion, but this may be as much a product of the desire for positive conclusions as of attentive readings. Coetzee himself disagrees with Attwell's suggestion that it represents a final absolution for Mrs. Curren, making a comment on his own novel with his usual distance and caution: "The end of the novel seems to me more troubled (in the sense that the sea can be troubled) than you imply. But here I am stepping onto precarious ground, or precarious water; I had better stop" (*Doubling the Point*, 250) (Attridge J.M. 103).

The reader is often prone to allegorising Coetzee's fiction; hence there is a temptation to project a climactic apotheosis onto texts that do not necessarily end dramatically but rather the way the body dies: inconclusively and with a lingering idea rather than a strong structural full stop.

The last paragraph of Age of Iron cannot be interpreted in one overriding sense: "I got back into bed, into the tunnel between the cold sheets. The curtains parted; he came

beside me. For the first time I smelled nothing. He took me in his arms and held me with a mighty force, so that the breath went out of me in a rush. From that embrace there was no warmth to be had" (Age of Iron 198).

For the first time Elizabeth Curren does not smell Verceuil, which could mean two things. Either she is no longer of this world and the ending is actually the first step of her conscious state into the next world; or we could say that she is still alive, and that she has become accustomed to Verceuil. This second interpretation is not that far removed from the first one in that Elizabeth Curren, by accepting Verceuil, has come to accept the rules of the body, the smells that it emits and the organic truths it represents. Verceuil has become an angel in Elizabeth Curren's eyes: she sees him as the winged victory: with magical wings but a broken body. The broken body, the dying body, is the truth that she has come to accept in accepting Vercueil's smell. Verceuil is the psychopomp, the dogman (see Disgrace) who has come to guide her into the next world.

The novel does not approach death only in the climax: the whole work, foreshadowed by the citation from Sophocles ("call no man happy until he is dead" [Disgrace 2]), treats the issue from the perspectives of the Erotic and the spiritual. The "disgrace" is more fundamental than the temporal issues of financial redundancy, professional calamity or even physical and moral pain. The real disgrace is the disgrace of dying like a dog in a world where "we are the castaways of God" (In the Heart 135):

> Coetzee gives literal weight to the comparison [between dog and man] by showing us what it is to die like a dog: 'They flatten their ears, they droop their tails, as if they too feel the disgrace of dying; locking their legs, they have to be pulled or pushed or carried over the threshold.'(143)/ The shame of it, the disgrace of dying: that is what renders, in this universe, all plots perverse, in that they are all constructed on that one great unavoidable certainty (Heyns 63).

At the level of plot and characterisation, the acceptance of death is an acceptance of individualism: to live alone is to die alone. This reflects the failed relationships that mark the novels, the lack of religious and metaphysical commonality that drives the actors of each piece into the flesh of the body. When a person dies, the body is whisked away and we are left with memories. Coetzee replicates this process in the endings of his fictional pieces.

One of the most immediate manifestations of this predilection is the all-important present-continuous tense Coetzee employs in most of his novels. Attridge writes: "the use of the present tense both heightens the immediacy of the narrated events and denies the text any retrospection, any place from which the writer can reflect on and express regret about (or approval of) the acts and attitudes described" (Attridge J.M. 143). The reader feels as helpless as one does in real life, incapable of understanding the highly charged symbols around us, under the Damoclean sword of an imminent death.

Gary Saul Morson's understanding of the Dostoevskian "Kairova time", a contingent conception of how life is lived where state of mind "responds unpredictably to evolving circumstances […] time and intention exhibit multiple potentials changing from moment to moment" (Morson 145) is an interesting description of a similar plane of supreme doubt and volatility (often life-threatening situations).

Structurally, Coetzee tends away from the chronological progressive novel towards an episodic structure that creates circularity. This is largely due to the weighting of the body in the corpus, for death, an abrupt seizure, violent and abrupt ending, casts its shadow on the writing itself, a style that lurches forth from the opening page like a newborn and is obliterated in medias res at the conclusion like the spasm of the heart that in turn cuts off all the synapses and then goes out like a spark in the brain.

The Soul

The soul living in the body is a dilemma expressed by the author. The motif of the "embodied soul" is recurrent in his work and deserves special treatment. The soul 'talks' to the body and to the mind. The "blindness" of the viscera and inner organs is related to the soul, reminding us of Schopenhauer's "will", something physical and pre-rational, on the inside, of which the mental is oblivious. Locating emotion through the body becomes a telling exercise, since there is often a significant distance between the two. The closer the two come together, the denser the space between them, the more vivid the soul is to

the narrative, and the closer the character is to death. This is repeated and underlined in Life & Times of Michael K and Waiting for the Barbarians.

This specifically spatial representation of dying is discussed by Scarry in The Body in Pain. She analyses space as a dynamic that develops in a positive corollary with the body's dying. The dying body also affects the atmosphere and sense of space in the novel. To die is to see space collapse progressively around the body:

> Stravinsky once described aging as "the ever-shrinking perimeter of pleasure." This constantly diminishing world ground is almost a given in representations of old age. As Ibbieta's bench dissolves beneath him, so the ground beneath the old grows insubstantial, ceases to belong to them. Sophocles' Oedipus forbidden from entering his homeland, Thebes, is also violator and trespasser of the grounds at Colonus; […] Beckett's Winnie, the most literal victim of Stravinsky's ever shrinking perimeter, is caught by a piece of ground that has snapped shut around her waist and that soon will close on the smaller circle of her neck (Scarry 33).

The soul is squeezed out of the space that collapses on the body. So it is that the subject of death becomes a focalising agent in Age of Iron, The Master of Petersburg and Life & Times of Michael K: Elizabeth Curren's movements are prescribed by the death that is calling her into an ever-shrinking perimeter; Fyodor Mikhailovich 's downward spiral into the page of writing is in the wake of another's death while Michael K attempts to shrink inwards till he is no more.

Although this study's position on the function of death in Coetzee's fiction is that it dramatises physiological truths, it should be noted that in addressing death and the limits of the body, his characters find recourse in a poetics that plays on the metaphysical religious archetype of the soul. This point is developed and illustrated by Attridge in J.M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading (151). This is noted in particular in the unequivocal language of David Lurie, who states that "[w]e are souls before we are born" (Disgrace 79) and the medical officer in Life & Times of Michael K who interprets Michael K as "a soul stirring its wings" (151).

However, Elizabeth Curren describes the soul as "neophyte, wet, blind, ignorant" (Age of Iron 186). This type of description is in line with Coetzee's corporeal poetics that seek to embody notions to a point of physicality that makes for a particularly sensual reading. The soul, even more abstract than the mind, has no form to speak of, or if it does, one that is unfathomable to man. By personifying and giving texture to it (noted poignantly in Curren's use of the adjective "wet"), Coetzee's conceit suggests a metaphysics that would best be termed *intra-physics*, revealing the physical mechanics of the most ethereal of forces and in a most paradoxical sense pointing to ancient pre-Socratic doctrines such as Pythagorean metempsychosis. Michael K's soul, according to the medical officer, is winged; Elizabeth Curren comments that as the body approaches death the "soul drowsy" lies "half out of its casing" while scars are places where the soul "tried to get out" of the body but was "kept in" (Age of Iron 68).

The conflict in the Coetzeean subject is not between body and soul, it is more similar to the Schopenhauerian division between the will (an amalgamation of the soul and the physique) and the mind. The soul wishes to escape the body, but this process implies a painful "weaning" of it through sickening and, ultimately, death. On the opposite pole of the schizophrenia created by the tri-division of the soul, body and mind is the benign presence of nature as a distant calling. The protagonists are all subconsciously searching for an ideal osmosis with the earth. Somewhere, "at a great distance", as if spoken to by the "Ka" (an ancient Egyptian term for the "spirit" or astral double), the mind is seduced by a mysterious, nostalgic "fog". This dream is of a perfect world where the mind is free of the body, but since the anatomy's survival dictates that of the soul and mind, it becomes a subconscious death wish.

Coetzee's work becomes a broader philosophical statement about accepting death: the body must steel itself to its own corruption. All of his major characters are standing at the door of physical annihilation in some way or another; the reader shares their dark enlightenment as the corporal testimony of the soul. We suffer with the protagonists through the needle-sharp mediation and subconsciously prepare ourselves for the last agonising hurdle before the big sleep.

Death and the grand conclusion

One of the fundamental principles of existentialism as enounced by Heidegger is that "existence precedes essence". This study has attempted to confirm this pattern in the

prose of JM Coetzee. It has been my argument that the treatment of the body, primarily as a defamiliarising agent, has raised a universe of immanence, doubt and pain to the fore of the writings. The dialogue between mind and body sustains itself in the opus without any easy solution. What lingers in the literature, rarely captured by the taxonomical approach of academia, is the power of the ineffable, offered in the oblique and complex semiotics of the body's will.

Coetzee's poetics are created by suffering bodies, some of these specifically *dying* bodies. While under the skin the soul manifests itself in rhapsodic dreams and mysterious signs when death is close, it is hidden and dormant during health. It is only in this state of silence (from the body and, consequently, the soul) that philosophical freedom is allowed - in other words, as long as the body is whole and well.

Because of the violent division of the infinite mind and the bordered body, ultimate freedom is freedom from the body; it is the only possible eternal state of bliss. However, this ideal emancipation cannot be achieved in life and signifies death; the anatomy is an oppressive master; it revels in its authority and is whimsical and potentially ruthless to its owner.

In the final analysis, when the last page of the novel (or the critique of the novel) is turned, the treatment of the body in the fiction of JM Coetzee reveals the soma as source of alterity and, because of this disorientation, empowerment. As the body moves towards death, its fictional world is given authority through its physical imagery: the reader is led

from the vaults of the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum* into the highly corporeal territory of *sentio ergo sum*.

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